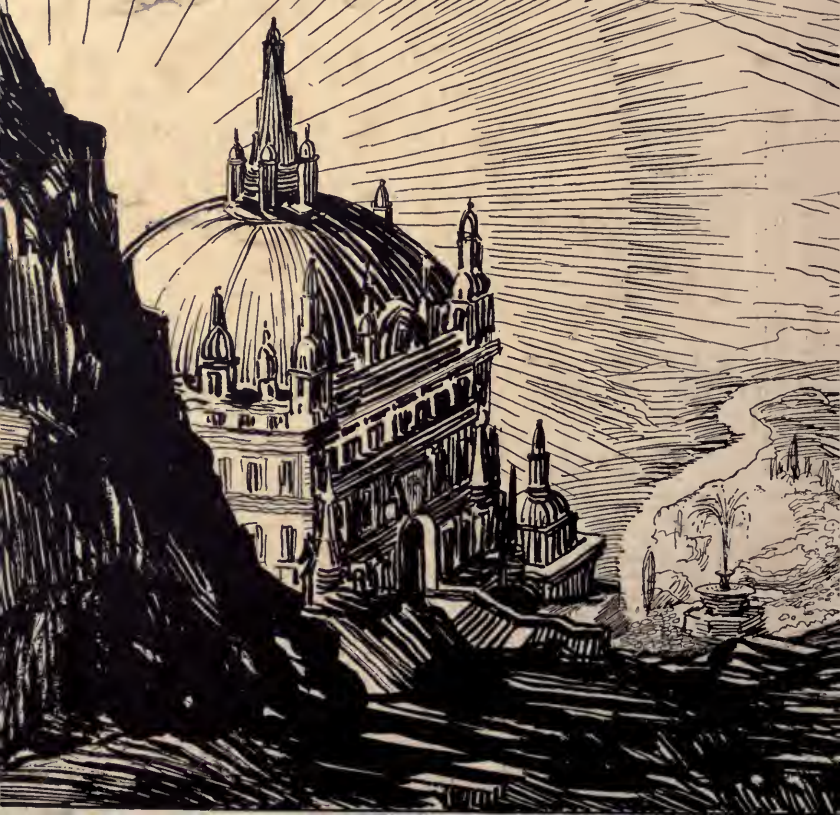


THE  
GILDED  
MAN

BY CLIFFORD SMITH

# LAND OF THE CONDOR





NARVA'S  
HOUSE

THE CONDOR  
GATE

R.G.  
Russom





THE GILDED MAN



THE GILDED MAN  
A ROMANCE OF THE ANDES

BY CLIFFORD SMYTH

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
RICHARD LE GALLIENNE



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TO  
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## THE GILDED MAN



## FOREWORD

**T**WO dreams have persistently haunted the imagination of man since dreams began. You find them in all mythologies, and, perhaps most dramatically, in the Arabian Nights: the dream of the Water of Immortality, and the dream of the Golden City. Within recent times—that is, during the sixteenth century—both were lifted out of the region of fairy lore, and men as far from “dreamers,” in the ordinary sense, as the “conquistador” Ponce de Leon and Sir Walter Raleigh raised them into the sphere of something like Elizabethan practical politics. Whether or not Ponce de Leon did actually discover the Fountain of Eternal Youth on the Bimini Islands concerns us but incidentally here. At all events, he seems to have died without drinking of it; as death on the scaffold was the penalty for Raleigh’s failure to discover El Dorado. So practically had the courts of Elizabeth and James regarded the dream of the Golden City, and so firm had been Raleigh’s own belief in it. Though Raleigh’s name is most conspicuously and tragically connected with it, of course it had been Spanish adventurers for several generations before—exploring that “Spanish Main” which they had already, and in romance forever, made their own—who had given that dream its local habitation and its name. Martinez had been the first to tell how, having drifted on the coast of Guiana, he had been taken inland to a city called Manoa,

whose king was in alliance with the Incas. Manoa, said he, to opened mouths and wondering eyes, on his return to Spain, was literally built, walls and roofs, houses big and little, of silver and gold. His tale, garnished with many other mysterious matters, soon speeded expedition after expedition, dreaming across those

“perilous seas  
In fairyland forlorn.”

All came back with marvels on their tongues. All had caught glimpses of the gilded domes of the city, but that was all. Gonzales Ximinez de Quesada from Santa Fé de Bogotá was “warmest,” perhaps; but he too failed. Many a daring sailor since has vainly gone on a like quest. Even in our prosaic times—in the true Elizabethan spirit, that, for all their romance, actually animated those enterprises of old time—when men sought real gold as now, not “faery-gold”—an enterprise, with a prospectus, shareholders, and those dreams now known as promised dividends, has made it its serious “incorporated” business to go in quest of El Dorado.

But, elaborate as all previous expeditions and enterprises have been, and dauntless as the courage of the individual explorer, one and all have failed—till now. Till now, I say—for at last El Dorado *has* been discovered, and it is my proud privilege to announce, for the first time, the name of its discoverer—Dr. Clifford Smyth.

Dr. Smyth has chosen the medium of fiction for the publication of his discovery, like other such eminent discoverers as the authors of *Erewhon* and *Utopia*, but that fact, I need hardly say, in nowise invalidates the authenticity and serious importance of his discovery.



Though truth be stranger than fiction, it has but seldom its charm, and, to use the by-gone phrase, Dr. Smyth's relation of happenings which we never doubt for a rapt moment did happen "reads as entertainingly as a fiction." In fact, the present writer—who confesses to the idleness of keeping *au courant* with the good and even merely advertised fiction of the day, recalls no fiction in some years that has seemed to him comparable in imaginative quality with *The Gilded Man*, or has given him, in any like degree, the special kind of delight which Dr. Smyth's narrative has given him. For any such thrill as the latter part of the book in particular holds, he finds that his memory must travel back, no difficult or lengthy journey, to Mr. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*—a book which one sees more and more taking its place as one of the classics of fantastic romance, the kind of romance which combines adventure with poetic strangeness; though, at its publication, "superior persons," with the notable exception of that paradoxical most superior person, and man of genius, Andrew Lang, disdained it as a passing "thriller."

Perhaps it is not indiscreet to say that one circumstance of Dr. Smyth's life gave him exceptional opportunities for that dreaming on his special object which is found to be the invariable incubation, so to say, preceding all great discoveries. For some years Dr. Smyth was United States consul at Carthagena, that unspoiled haunted city of the Spanish Main, which, it may be recalled, furnishes a spirited chapter in the history of Roderick Random, Esquire, of His Majesty's Navy. He was, therefore, seated by the very door to that land of enchantment, which, as we have been saying, had drawn so

many adventurous spirits under roaring canvas across the seas, in the spacious days. He was but a short mule-back journey from that table-land raised high in the upper Andes where Bogotá, the capital of Colombia, is situated, the region around which all those "superstitions" retailed by Indians to those early adventurers centre. Descendants of the same Indians still tell the same stories, and still the average prosaic mind laughs at them as "superstitions." El Dorado! as if any one could take it seriously nowadays! Has not the term long been a picturesque synonym for The City of Impossible Happiness, the Land of Heart's Desire, the Paradise of Fools, and all such cities and realms and destinations and states of being, as the yearning heart of man, finding nowhere on the earth he knows, imagines in the sun-tipped cloudland of his dreams, and toward which he pathetically turns his eyes, and stretches out his arms to the end?

But what if El Dorado were no such mere figment of man's aching fancy, after all; what if the El Dorado, so passionately believed in by those eminently practical Elizabethans, did all the time, as they surmised, exist upon this solid earth, and should still quite concretely exist there . . .

Is it not likely that such might be the musings of a man situated as was Dr. Smyth, in the very heart of the mystery, a man of affairs, touched with imagination, as all really capable men of affairs are; and, as he listened to the old Indian tales, and talked with miners, and all manner of folk acquainted with the *terrain* of the legend, what could he do but fall under the same spell that had laid its ghostly hand on the mighty heart of Raleigh

centuries before, and follow its beckoning, as the other inspired madmen before him?

But, as we have seen, his doom was to be different. For so long generations of dead men had come crying, like those three old horsemen in Morris's *Glittering Plain*: "Is this the Land? Is this the Land?" to turn broken-hearted away; but from him, of all men born, throughout the generations, was to be heard at last the joyous, ringing cry: "This *is* the Land! This *is* the Land!"

Pause for one moment more and think what El Dorado has meant to mankind, think with all your might; and then think what must have been the feelings of the man who stood looking upon it, and knew that he—that *he*—had found it. In such moments of transfiguring realization men often lose their reason, and, as we say, it is not a little surprising that Dr. Smyth is alive to tell the tale. The lovely knowledge might well have struck him as by lightning, and the secret once more have been buried in oblivion.

I have all along taken it for granted that Dr. Smyth's *The Gilded Man* is a genuine narrative, the true story of a wonderful happening. If any one should come to me and tell me that I am simple-minded, that it is no such thing, and that, as the children say, Dr. Smyth "made it up all out of his own head," I should still need a lot of convincing, and, were conviction at last forced upon me, I could only answer that Dr. Smyth must then possess a power of creating illusion such as few romancers have possessed. For there is a plausibility, a particularity, a concreteness about all the scenes and personages in *The Gilded Man* that make it impossible not to believe them true and actual, however removed from common ex-

perience they may seem. I should like very much to be more particular, but I cannot very well be so without betraying the story—or “true and veracious history,” whichever it may turn out to be. Still I can hint at one or two matters without betraying too much. The mysterious queen, Sajipona, for example, seems not only real, but she and her love-story make one of the loveliest idylls in what, for want of a better word, one may call “supernatural” romance that has ever been written. And all the dream-like happenings in the great cave, though of the veritable “stuff that dreams are made of,” are endowed with as near and moving a sense of reality as though they were enacted on Broadway.

Of the cave itself, which may be said to be the Presiding Personage of the book, it seems to me impossible to speak with too great admiration. It is, without exaggeration, an astonishing piece of invention; I refer not merely to the ingenuity of its mechanical devices, though I might well do that, for they are not merely devised with an exceeding cleverness, but the cleverness is of a kind that thrills one with a romantic dread, the kind of awe-inspiring devices that we shudder at when we try to picture the mysteries of the temples of Moloch. Dr. Smyth's invention here is of no machine-made, puzzle-constructed order. We feel that he has not so much invented these devices, but dreamed them—seen them himself with a thrill of fear and wonder in a dream. And the great device of them all, that by which the cave is lighted so radiantly and yet so mystically, outsoars ingenuity, and is nothing short of a high poetic inspiration. But all these details, each in itself of a distinguished originality, gain an added value of impressive-



ness from the atmosphere of noble poetic imagination which enfolds them all, that atmosphere which always distinguishes a work of creation from one of mere invention. I do not wish to seem to speak in superlatives, but, in my opinion, Dr. Smyth's cave of The Gilded Man belongs with the great caves of literature. I thought of *Vathek* as I read it, though it is not the least the same, except in that quality of imaginative atmosphere.

With the purely "human" interest of the book, the daylight scenes and doings, he is no less successful. His plot is constructed with great skill and is full of surprises. The manner in which he "winds" into it is particularly original. Then, too, his characters are immediately alive, and there is some good comedy naturally befallen. General Herran and Doctor Miranda are delightfully drawn South American characters, and the atmosphere of a little South American republic convincingly conveyed, evidently from sympathetic experience. Nor must the absurd Mrs. Quayle be forgotten, and particularly her jewels, which play such an eccentric part in the story—one of Dr. Smyth's quaintest pieces of cleverness.

But it is time I ended my proud rôle of showman, and allowed the show to begin. So this and no more: If Dr. Smyth has, as I personally believe from the convincing manner of his book, discovered El Dorado, he is to be congratulated alike on the discovery and his striking method of publishing forth the news; but if he has merely dreamed it for our benefit, then I say that a man whom we have long respected as a wise and generous critic of other men's books, should lose no time in writing more books of his own.

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE



# THE GILDED MAN

## I

### IN WHICH COMET GOES LAME

WHEN, one evening in the late Autumn, David Meudon reached the entrance to Stoneleigh Garden, where Una Leighton awaited him, it was evident something unusual had happened.

"You are late," she said, as he clasped the slender hand extended to him in welcome.

"I could ride no faster. Comet is lame."

The tired bay, belying his name, stood dejectedly, one white foreleg slightly bent, as if seeking relief from a weight it was weary of bearing. By the friendly way in which he stretched forth his muzzle to touch the girl's proffered fingers, Comet was evidently not a stranger to her endearments.

"Poor Comet! Why didn't you take better care of him?"

"I was too impatient at the start, and that got him into trouble. After that, of course, we had to go slowly. I hated the delay. I hated having to listen to my own thoughts for so long."

Her gray eyes fixed questioningly upon the bronzed,

sharp-featured man, she noted his restless gaze, his riding-whip's irritable tattoo on polished boot-top as he stood at her side. Then, flinging her arms about his neck, her face, flushed with pleasure and expressive of a mingled tenderness and anxiety, turned expectantly to his.

"David, you are here!" she said impulsively. "You are glad, aren't you? Say that your thoughts aren't gloomy any more."

"What need to say it—Una!"

Silently the two lovers threaded the box-bordered path leading to the great stone mansion beyond, pausing to admire the flowers that still bloomed in a straggling sort of way, or marking the loss of those whose gay colors and delicate fragrance had formed a part of their own joyous companionship a month ago. But this evening, as if reflecting Nature's autumn mood, there was something of melancholy—restraint, where restraint had never been before—in David's bearing; while with Una there was an affectionate solicitude that strove to soothe an unspoken trouble.

"You must stay to-night," she said; "it would be cruel to ride Comet back."

"But your Uncle—will he care to have me here?"

"What a question! Of course he will."

"Are you sure? He was in town the other day to see me. Did he tell you?"

"No. But then, Uncle Harold seldom tells what he has been doing."

"He was in one of his grim moods; cordial enough outwardly; but, inside, I felt a curious sort of malevolence. That's an ugly word—but it seemed just that."

"Uncle Harold malevolent! That isn't very nice of you to say."

"He asked me if I thought our marriage should take place."

"And you said——?"

"Nothing."

"David!"

"I am unworthy of you, Una—I feel it. There are men, you know, who have in their past things that make them unworthy the woman they love. I confess, there are dark shadows, haunting things in my past. I can't explain them, even to myself. I don't altogether know what they are—queer as that sounds! But—some day they might come between us. When I rode over just now, I made up my mind to try to tell you. You ought to know——"

"David," she interrupted, "I don't want to know. I love you as you are to-day. If you were different in the past, before I knew you, I don't care to hear about it."

In spite of his self-depreciation, in the eyes of the world David Meudon would be regarded in every way a worthy suitor for the hand of Una Leighton. Clean of stock, so far as the gifts of blood and social station go, he had inherited besides a fortune that would be considered large even in a nation of millionaires. This inheritance, coming to him through the death of his father and mother in the middle of his college course, had not proved a snare to him. After completing his education, he had traveled extensively, not through an idle curiosity to see the world, but from a wish to perfect himself in certain studies calling for a wider knowledge than could be gathered from books or tutors.

It was during his travels abroad, after he had left his eccentric schoolmate, Raoul Arthur, in India, that David first met Una Leighton, who was spending a winter in England with her uncle. The meeting ripened into an intimacy that survived the distractions of European travel, and drew David, a constant visitor, to the picturesque old mansion, Una's home, on the outskirts of the little Connecticut village of Rysdale.

There followed those memorable experiences of youth—courtship and betrothal. David loved with all the fervor of a mature passion, a passion that quite overshadowed all his former interests. Love for him was an idyl of dreams and delicious fantasies, a paradise where he and Una delighted in all the harmless exaggerations of poetry and romance. No cloud dimmed their happiness. The brightest kind of future seemed to stretch indefinitely before them.

All the world—the world of Rysdale—knew of their love and discussed it eagerly. Their daylong wanderings together, their absorption in each other, appealed to the sensible farmers and their wives, who watched with tireless interest the development of this romance in their midst. There was something, besides the rumors of his great wealth, in the personality of David that would easily account for this interest. As a result of his long years of solitary travel he had acquired an indefinable air of reserve that was emphasized by features almost Indian in their clean-cut sharpness and immobility. His whole appearance, indeed, was of the kind traditionally suggesting mystery—a mystery that inevitably arouses curiosity in those who come within its influence.

Had Una been a stranger, spending a summer, as so



many strangers did, in the little mountain hamlet, her intimacy with David might have passed unheeded. But she belonged very much to the place. Generations ago her ancestors had settled here. At that initial epoch in local history, Stoneleigh was the only building of any importance in or near Rysdale—and from that period to this Stoneleigh had been the home of the Leightons. Before they bought the gray-gabled mansion (St. Maur's House it was then called) it was occupied by a small congregation of Benedictines, who came from France to establish themselves in this quiet corner of the new world. When the House passed from the monks into the hands of that stout Scotch pioneer, John Leighton, it was a desolate sort of ruin. But its walls were well built, and the thrift of its new owners gradually added the wings and the square, central tower needed for the family comfort.

Leighton was thus one of the oldest names in the neighborhood. The family bearing it had always prospered. Years ago their income, what with careful saving and shrewd investment, was sufficient to let them give up farming. This they did, and settled down to the dignified ease that, in an English community, belongs to the household of a county "squire," or to a "lord of the manor."

Harold Leighton, the present owner of Stoneleigh, was more of a recluse than any of his predecessors. To the gossips of Rysdale, indeed, who knew something of the history of the place, it seemed as if the cowl of the monkish founder of the House had fallen upon the shoulders of this gray-haired old man. He was looked upon as a student of unprofitable matters, lacking in the canny

enterprise distinguishing the Leightons before him, and that had built up the family fortunes. By some he was liked; by others—and these were in the majority—the satirical smile, the cool reserve, the assumption of superiority with which he met the social advances of his neighbors, were set down as indications of a character to be watched with suspicion, and that were certainly not of the right Rysdale stamp.

Una, however, was different. The villagers did not regard her with the hostility that they had for her uncle, Orphaned at an early age, she had easily captured and held the affection of those who knew her. The tawny-haired girl, bubbling over with friendly prattle, her gray eyes—bluer then, as with the sky-tint of a clear dawn—sparkling with youthful enthusiasms, had a host of comrades and admirers long before she reached her teens. With equal grace and favor this radiant little creature accepted the tribute of farmer and farm-hand, and when it came to playmates was decidedly more at ease with the village maidens than with the decorous young ladies who were occasionally brought to Stoneleigh on a visit of state from the city. As Una grew older, this choice of associates, unchecked and even encouraged by her uncle and Elizabeth Quayle, the worthy but not over-astute matron who looked after Leighton's household, had its drawbacks. The girl's beauty, which was of no ordinary kind, inevitably touched with its flame victims who were not socially intended for this kind of conflagration. Una sometimes shared in their subsequent misery; but she was unable to lighten their woes in the only way they could be lightened. And when she discovered that the refusal of their offers usually meant the



breaking up of a treasured friendship, she had been known to weep bitterly and form all kinds of self-denying resolutions for the future.

The climax to her griefs in this respect, a climax partly responsible for her flight to Europe, came through the weakness (so his indignant aunt called it) of the district schoolmaster, Andrew Parmelee. Andrew was a solitary dreamer, a friendless, inoffensive sort of person, absorbed in books, oblivious to the world around him. Learning, such wisps and strays of it as lodged in his mind as a result of his omnivorous reading, he was quite incapable of imparting. The use of the ferule, also, was an enigma to him. Hence, there were those unkind enough to whisper that the Rysdale school, under his management, was not what it should be. But every one liked him, in a tolerant sort of way; and with Una he was in particular favor. Andrew didn't know this, at least for some time. When he did find it out, that is, when, quite by accident, as it seemed, Una tripped into his school one day to pay him a visit, it had quite a disastrous effect on him. Before that, women, in general and in particular, were utterly unknown to him, creatures to be shunned, to be feared. He was familiar, of course, with the eccentricities of his aunt, Hepzibah Armitage. She looked after his wardrobe, fed him, warned him of the various pitfalls of youth, stopped his spending the money allowed him by the village trustees on the ancient histories for which he had an insatiable appetite. She ruled with a rod of iron, and the rod wasn't always pleasant. But for all that, he felt that life without Aunt Hepzibah, although it might give him one mad, rapturous day of freedom, was too bewildering, too dangerous to contem-

plate as a steady form of existence. Aunt Hepzibah was an institution; she was not a woman. He had heard of men falling in love with women. Such an accident, involving his Aunt Hepzibah, was unthinkable—unless, indeed, something like the conquest of the Scythians by the Amazons, of which he had read in his Herodotus, should be repeated in Rysdale.

As for the girls in Andrew's school, it was impossible to think of them except as so many varieties of human tyranny. They were more perplexing, as a rule, certainly more unmanageable, than the boys. This was due to the languishing friendships which they tried to contract with him, and which they mirthfully abandoned just so soon as he began to take them seriously. In fact, there was nothing in Andrew's fancied or actual experience so terrible—not even Aunt Hepzibah or the Amazons of Herodotus—as the schoolgirl just old enough to plan and carry out this kind of campaign against him. Instances are on record, indeed, in which, convinced that some overgrown girl was in rebellion, he had dismissed his school on the plea of a hastily imagined holiday, and fled to the woods.

Una, however, in the full bloom of her eighteen years had not been one of Andrew's pupils, and thus had not tormented him in this particular manner. Hence, when she stood at the schoolhouse door, one fine morning, asking if she might attend one of his classes, he suspected nothing. Overcome by her murmured assurance of interest, he made room on his little platform for her and for her two friends from the city, never dreaming that these demure young ladies were not really so absorbed in the joys of learning as they appeared to be.

Memorable for him was the next half hour, during which he plunged his pupils through an incoherent lesson in history, vividly conscious all the while of the three pairs of eyes that were fastened upon him. When the ordeal was over, and he succeeded in bowing his visitors out of the schoolhouse, he had the blissful consciousness that he, Andrew Parmelee, schoolmaster of Rysdale, had been bidden to Stoneleigh whenever he chose to visit that historic mansion.

Aunt Hepzibah, as was to be expected from her perverse disposition, opposed the acceptance of this invitation. But Andrew for once went his own way. Within a month after Una's visit to the school he called at Stoneleigh, where he was received with a cordiality that quite dumbfounded him. There was a brief but miserable period of diffidence and terror, extending over several subsequent visits; after which Andrew found that it was really possible to talk to this wonderful, gray-eyed creature as he had never dared talk to any one before. In fact, Una listened to him—to his little ambitions, his beliefs, his petty trials—with a kindly sympathy that was quite the most perfect thing he had ever imagined.

Then came the end to his romance. It was inevitable, of course. He wanted her to do more than simply listen to him—and that was just the one thing more that she could not do. It was all very tragic to both of them. Andrew was broken-hearted, full of heroics about fidelity, eternity, death. And Una—it was her first experience in human sorrow, and she was genuinely shocked and repentant.

## II

### IN UNA'S GARDEN

UNTIL David told her that evening in the garden at Stoneleigh, Una had not known that her uncle opposed her marriage. No reason was given for his opposition—and David's attitude was quite as much of a puzzle. He talked of some shadow in his past, and was on the point of telling Una what it was. But she stopped him. Their love, she said, had to do with the present, the future; it had nothing to do with the past. Nevertheless, she wished David had set himself right with Leighton.

"Why didn't you answer Uncle Harold?" she asked.

At first he avoided her glance, snapping his riding-whip nervously among the withered sunflower stalks. Then he turned to her.

"I don't know," he said.

"You knew he was wrong."

"In a way—yes. And then, I wondered if, after all, he was right. As I said, I can't explain it to myself. You stopped my speaking to you about it. And yet, do you know, after talking with your uncle, I convinced myself—I thought I convinced myself—that I was unworthy of you, that our marriage would be wrong."

"Don't say that!" she exclaimed angrily. "Unless

your love for me has changed, it is the one right thing in the world—as mine is for you.”

“Beloved! Let it be so,” he said, his dark mood vanishing. “Let the first day of our new life be the first day of our past. Do you remember that first day? Coming down the river we spoke hardly a word. You laughed at me, called me lazy, the boat slipped along so slowly. And you were right! Watching you I forgot the stupid business of rowing. Never before were you so beautiful—but now you are a million times more beautiful! How I wanted to kiss you! If I had dared kiss just a bit of your dress, anything blessed by touching you! But I didn’t—not then! How it all happened afterward, when we landed at our island, is the mystery—or, rather, the most natural thing in the world. I was tongue-tied as ever. Not a word in the language was in reach of me—at least, I couldn’t think of one. Naturally, the dictionary men left out our words; they didn’t know you. And yet, we understood! Did the birds tell us, I wonder, or was it written on the trees, or whispered in the golden air? Love talks without words. But now—” he broke off abruptly—“now I must answer Uncle Harold.”

“Why?”

“I wish I could talk it over with Raoul,” he went on, not heeding the question.

“Why with Raoul?”

“You don’t know Raoul.”

“Tell me about him.”

“He understands me, that’s all. We have been together a lot. But what’s the use of thinking of him!



He's in India, probably—or, maybe, Bogota—yes, it must be Bogota—and will stay there for years."

"You are fond of him?"

"No! I can't imagine any one being fond of him. He fascinates you. He's queer. He is my age, yet his hair is white—even his eyebrows and his eyelashes are white. Fancy a young man with white eyelashes! There's not a hint of color in his face. And his eyes—you can't tell what they are; neither can you avoid them when they stop twitching and fix themselves on you. Did you ever see a human being jump out at you from a pair of eyes? It sounds foolish; but then, you've never seen Raoul! Love leaps out of your eyes, and all the beauty of trees and rivers. God made your eyes and put you in them just to help people. It was the devil who made Raoul's eyes."

They lingered at the far corner of the terraced garden where a low hedge of box overlooked a deep, silent grove of balsams. Beyond, at one side, the gray walls of Stoneleigh, the square tower bearing aloft a single ray of light, rose indistinctly against a background of firs. The familiar scene, softened by the twilight, dispelled their first feeling of uneasiness. Everything had changed. Once more the world was brightened by their love. The touch of Una's hand, the fragrance of her hair, the joy of her quivering lips, were, for David, the only things that mattered.

Since their first meeting, a year ago on the Derwent-water, in England, love had grown with these two. On the night before that meeting, David had reached Keswick, where Una was staying. Skiddaw and Helvellyn, when first he saw those famous peaks, were dimly out-

lined behind the evening mists. Next morning the sky was cloudless, and although David was familiar with the scenery of Alps, Andes and Himalaya, the charm of this English landscape touched him deeply. The peaceful lake, surrounded by steep hills of living green, and holding on its breast thickly wooded islands, stirred a new longing within him. These hills, it is true, were not comparable in height or sweeping contour to the majestic altitudes of Southern Asia or Western South America. Neither was the Derwentwater equal, in certain scenic effects, to similar bodies of water that had won his admiration in distant countries. Here, nevertheless, Nature was revealed in her loveliest mood, and David yielded himself delightedly to her gracious influence.

As he floated dreamily in his skiff on the Derwentwater, the dip of his oars made the only visible ripple on the glassy surface of the lake, while the rugged outlines of the hills, drenched in sunlight, seemed to weave a fairy circle into which the world of ordinary experience might not enter. The scene reacted inevitably on his own emotions. For the first time in many months a feeling of complete restfulness possessed him, a mood ripe for dreams and all that hazy kind of speculation lying on the borderland of dreams. In this mental state he sought one of the islands whose sylvan shadows lengthened over the water's sunny surface. The hollow echo from oar and rowlock, the grating of prow on pebbled beach, broke the silence that had surrounded him ever since he left the little wharf at Keswick. The lightest of summer breezes stirred the topmost branches above him. Invitation was in the air, rest beneath the trees. This was surely the morning of the world, and he was

the discoverer of this nameless island. Strange that it should be here, unmarred, untouched, unknown, in populous England!

There was welcome in the crackle of twigs beneath his feet; a responsive thrill from the green moss upon which he threw himself. As he tried to catch the blue of the sky beyond the moving canopy of green, he idly wondered whether he was the first to pierce the island's solitude, whether its secret had been kept for him.

Perhaps it was in answer to his unuttered query that the stillness was suddenly broken by the faintest echo of silvery laughter. He listened in surprise, for the island was far too small, he imagined, to screen either house or camp from the view of any one approaching it, and before he left his boat he had satisfied himself that no other summer idler was here before him. Nevertheless, there was that tantalizing laughter, coming from a portion of the island opposite the beach on which he had landed—and there was the shattering of his day-dreams.

He parted the low-lying branches of some bushes growing between him and the shore, but could see nothing save the clear expanse of lake upon which there was neither sail nor rowboat. He perceived, however, judging by the distance of the water below him, that the shore of the island must here become a diminutive cliff, in the shelter of which, doubtless, was the being whose laughter he scarcely knew whether to welcome or shun. The fairy-like spot obviously had some prosaic owner who was there to enjoy what was his—or hers. The laughter was unmistakably a woman's.

David rose hastily from his retreat beneath the trees,



uncertain whether to apologize for his intrusion or to slip away unperceived. After all, the laughter chimed in pleasantly enough with his roving fancies. There had been wood-nymphs before, if one can believe the old romancers, who sang the carefree joys of the glens they inhabited—and perhaps this was a wood-nymph. His curiosity aroused, David peered again through the branches. This time he saw her.

She was not a wood-nymph of old mythology, but an incarnation of the spirit of youth that all morning had pursued him. She was clad in the simplest of sailor suits, the blouse of gray silk opening loosely about her delicately moulded throat and neck, her hair straying in tawny ringlets over her shoulders and reaching down to the book which she held in her lap. At her side sat an old man, of stalwart frame, white-haired, with the strongly lined face and sharpened features typical of the student. A wide-brimmed quaker hat lying at his feet emphasized his freedom from the conventionalities of dress and was in strict keeping with his long black coat and voluminous trousers.

They were reading a book together, a book that had evidently provoked the disturbing laughter and brought a grim look of amusement to the old man's face. The noise made by David, however, broke up their pleasant occupation. The girl turned her head, gazing curiously at the spot whence came the sound of rustling leaves. What she saw stirred her as nothing ever had before. Her glance met David's; and to both of them it seemed as if all their lives they had been waiting for the revelation of that moment. Her pulse quickened; her cheek

paled, then grew rosy red; her gray eyes dilated with mingled alarm and pleasure.

The sudden, deep impression was dashed by a singular interruption. The girl's companion, his back half turned to David, his face still expressive of amusement, and looking straight before him at the ripple of water kissing the pebbles at his feet, spoke in a loud, harsh voice:

"Una," he said, "remember the schoolmaster! This man's world is not ours. What does he know of Rysdale?"

She looked down confusedly, aware that her uncle—for it was Harold Leighton—without seeing this stranger who had so quickly aroused her interest, spoke as if he knew who he was and all about him. When she looked again, David was gone.

Between that first meeting and this evening, a year after, when they stood together in Una's garden at Stoneleigh, they had lived through much of Love's first golden record. Their experiences had not always been cloudless. Harold Leighton, it is true, did not actively oppose their marriage; but he had borne himself in a manner that showed, at times, either a singular indifference, or a covert mistrust of the man who was so soon to take from him his brother's only daughter. It might be from jealousy, it might be from a perfectly natural feeling of caution; at any rate, he never discussed their plans with them, he never explained his attitude towards them. Never again did he allude to the schoolmaster, nor account for the strange words he had used on the little island in Derwentwater.

For the most part he watched their courtship with a sort of whimsical curiosity, but always withholding

his assent from the marriage to which they looked forward. Una was indignant at his final attempt to separate them. His suspicions and David's quixotic manner of meeting them increased her faith in her lover. Never before had she been so perfectly happy as she was this evening with him in the garden's autumnal silence.

"It will soon be forever," she whispered.

"You are not afraid?"

"If it were possible for our love to die, if it were as shortlived as the sunflowers, if some one had the power to take it from us, I would be afraid. Tell me that no one has the power, David."

He held her from him for a space, his eyes searching hers.

"You alone have the power, Una," he said.

From a slowly moving figure amid the bushes behind them came an uncompromising question:

"David, you have told her?"

The dusky outline, the large quaker hat, the wide-skirted coat catching occasionally among the dry twigs and branches, revealed Harold Leighton. He stood in the center of the pathway, his gray eyes fixed upon them, awaiting an answer.

"David has told me," said Una firmly.

"You have told her?" he repeated.

"I have told her that I love her," he answered.

"Is that all?"

"I told her that I am unworthy of her."

"Why are you unworthy of her?"

"You speak as if you knew something against me," said David. Then added fiercely, "Tell it!"

With an odd smile on his face the old man looked at Una.

"He says he is unworthy of you—you are free," he said. "Una, how do you choose?"

She bowed her head before her lover.

"David, I love you," she said.

The old man turned towards the house.

"David, I see your horse is lame; you have ridden him to death," he said drily. "You had better spend the night at Stoneleigh."

### III

#### A CHAPTER ON GHOSTS

A STRANGE thing happened that night at Stoneleigh.

For the first time in the annals of the younger Rysdale generation, the great bare room at the top of the house, adjoining Harold Leighton's laboratory, had a guest. In the days of the St. Maur Brotherhood the monks used this room as an oratory. The shadowy outline of a crucifix, which had once risen above an unpretentious altar, could still be traced in the rough plaster on the narrow east wall. At either side of this crucifix the blackened marks of bygone sconces were visible, while in the north and south walls of the apartment there still remained a number of huge spikes, rusty with age and swathed in cobwebs, from which had hung the Fourteen Stations of the Cross.

Since the departure of the monks this oratory had been practically abandoned by their successors at Stoneleigh. The earlier members of the Leighton family had shared the dislike of their fellow townsmen for anything approaching "papisty." To this prejudice, as it affected the use of the oratory, was afterwards added the belief that the gloomy chamber was still frequented by certain ghostly members of the ancient Brotherhood

into whose spectral doings it was just as well not to pry too closely. A live monk was bad enough, according to some of Harold Leighton's ancestors; but a dead monk who "haunted" was too disreputable altogether to have anything to do with. Hence, as there was more room at Stoneleigh than could profitably be used, it was thought best to close up this ancient oratory, leaving it to such grim visitants from the past as might choose it for a meeting place.

There had been seasons, however, when dust and cobwebs were sufficiently disturbed to bring some semblance of cheer into the desolate apartment. Thus, the festivities accompanying the marriage of Una's grandparents had reached their climax here in a ball at which the local worthies mingled with a number of excellent persons from that outside world of fashion vaguely known as "the city." No spectral guest, tonsured or otherwise, appeared on this occasion, and when the revels were ended the legend that Stoneleigh's oratory was haunted no longer commanded the respect, or even the interest, of the credulous.

That was more than half a century ago; and now David Meudon was the guest of this neglected chamber. He was in a joyous mood. A man more tenacious of impressions could not have thrown off so easily the irritation caused by the meeting with Harold Leighton in the garden. The elder man's suspicions would have poisoned whatever possibility there might be of immediate enjoyment. The presence of Una, however, her unqualified acceptance of him, her uncle's suddenly changed attitude, effectually dulled David's resentment. Leighton had agreed, apparently, to the plan for an early



wedding, and had even proposed that the married couple should live at Stoneleigh. In spite of David's great wealth, neither he nor his immediate ancestors had been identified with a locality peculiarly their own; they had never had a family home. With Una, on the contrary, the last of the Leightons, the ancestral tie that roots itself under some particular hearthstone was especially strong. She was pleased, therefore, with the offer that promised to make Stoneleigh hers—and so, in the main, was David.

He liked the old house; its history appealed to his imagination. He stood somewhat in awe, it is true, of its present owner, and the prospect of living with him did not promise unalloyed happiness. But there was something about Harold Leighton, a suggestion of mystery, that went well with this ancient place, and completely satisfied David. He laughed at the Stoneleigh traditions; but when Leighton proposed spending the evening in the oratory he gladly assented. David had never been in this part of the house, although he had often wanted to explore its possible mysteries. The opportunity to do this had not come until now.

"Yes, there are ghosts here," Harold Leighton replied to the young man's jesting query as he, David and Una entered the great bare room together.

"Then you believe in ghosts?"

"Of course Uncle Harold believes in them," exclaimed Una. "I believe in them, and so do you."

"That depends. Show me one and I might."

"Well," commented Leighton; "this is the ghost room, and here we are. Perhaps your skepticism will find

something to try its teeth on. In honor of St. Maur we ought to have a demonstration."

"Splendid!" laughed David. "But you don't mean it. People never mean what they say when they talk approvingly of ghosts. You are known for a skeptic yourself, Mr. Leighton. You accept nothing that has not passed muster with science."

"There may be a science of ghosts," retorted the savant. "Science is not limited to any department of human knowledge. A scientific theory is based on a collection of facts. How do you know I have not made a collection of ghost-facts?"

"And so have a new theory of ghosts to offer!"

"You don't really think those old monks come back, uncle?" objected Una.

"Oh, I'm not going to tell the secrets of my laboratory so easily—and to such a pair of tyros," was the evasive answer.

They stood before the great fireplace which a thrifty ancestor had built into the east wall, and enjoyed to the full the warmth that had not as yet reached the remote spaces of the gloomy chamber. It needed a fire to bring some show of comfort to this wilderness of dust and cobwebs. A few pieces of colonial furniture stood out in the melancholy wastes—a faded lounge, a gargantuan dresser, several stiff-backed chairs still nursing their puritanism. At the far end of the room various objects of a decidedly modern appearance, suggesting the workshop of a physicist, aroused David's curiosity. For an explanation of these he turned to Leighton.

"Is this your laboratory?" he asked.

"What do you think of it?" was the reply. "Plenty



of space, isn't there? A man could have a score of ghosts here—ghosts of monks, you know—nosing about for their comfortable old quarters."

"Not so very comfortable in their day, Uncle," suggested Una; "nor in ours, for that matter."

Leighton chuckled grimly. "Are you interested in ghosts, David?" he asked, looking keenly at him.

"What do you mean by ghosts?"

"Ah, that's it! This old room—are there ghosts in it, I wonder? The nail marks in the walls, the stains where the lights were hung, the shadowy remains of the altar—can you shake off the feeling that the Brotherhood is still at prayers here, that it still has Stoneleigh for its home?"

"The Brotherhood no longer exists."

"There's a family tradition, anyway, that assures us of its ability to produce some excellent examples of the old-fashioned, conventional ghost. A very great aunt of mine, for instance, once ventured alone into this room and was met by a stalwart being who scowled at her from under his brown hood and waved her majestically out of his presence."

"That's the kind of ghost one likes to hear about and see," commented David.

"It didn't please my aunt particularly. The fright prostrated her for months. Other imaginative ancestors have heard the monks chanting together, and seen spectral lights moving about here at midnight."

"You speak as if you believed it all."

"I can't be defrauded of my family traditions."

"How queer it is!" exclaimed Una, who had been wandering about the room and now rejoined Harold and

David before the fireplace. "I like it, even if it is dirty. Why have you broken your rule and brought us here, Uncle? And why do you talk as if you believed in the Stoneleigh ghosts? You know you don't."

"Ghosts!" he ejaculated. "I have been making some experiments recently. I thought you might be interested in them."

"Experiments in ghosts," ruminated David, who believed Leighton capable of anything.

"Yes," said the old man, enjoying his bewilderment. "My ghosts may be different from those you have in mind. If you have followed the recent developments in psychology you probably know that there are ghosts attached to the living, whatever the case may be in regard to the dead."

"No, I never heard that."

"Not in those words. 'Ghosts' is not a term used by the scientist. It involves a medieval superstition. But I am interested in things more than in words, and I am not afraid to say that we have been rediscovering ghosts."

"Uncle, don't talk enigmas—or nonsense," remonstrated Una.

"I confess, sir, I don't follow you," added David.

"Did you ever feel that you had lost yourself?" asked Leighton abruptly.

"I don't understand."

"If you forget a thing, you lose just that much of yourself, don't you? When you sleep, you enter a world of dreams. In that world you think, speak, go through a set of vivid experiences. Awake, you are aware that you have had these vivid experiences—and yet, you can't

possibly remember them. You are dimly conscious that you were in another world and that while there you thought, suffered, rejoiced, much in the same way that you do here. At times you have a vague feeling that you have undergone some important crisis in your dream-existence, or you wake up with the sensation of having reached some high peak of happiness. But you cannot recall the details, or even the general outlines, of what has happened. Not a scene of this dreamland, of which you are an occasional inhabitant, can you picture to your waking thought; nor does your waking memory hold the visage, or even the name, of one of your dream-associates."

"All this has to do with dreams," objected David. "It is admittedly unreal."

"Don't rely too much on old definitions. A part of you that sleeps now does experience this dream-life and finds it real. The trouble is, this dream part of you forgets; it is unable to report to the waking personality what it has seen.

"But it is not only in sleep that this dream-personality takes the place of that which we call the real self. The opium-eater inhabits a world, opened to him by his drug, and closed, even to his memory, when the effects of that drug wear off. Then, there is that curious phase of dipsomania in which the victim, apparently possessed of all his faculties, goes through actual experiences—travels, talks with people, transacts business—and when he recovers from his fit of intoxication finds it impossible to remember a single circumstance of the many known to him while under the sway of alcohol. The phenomena of hypnotism give instances of similar independent men-

tal divisions in a single human personality. All this is the familiar material of modern psychology, out of which the scientists build strange and varied theories. I call these divided, or lost, personalities 'ghosts.' "

"Ghosts of the living, not of the dead."

"More uncanny than the old-fashioned kind," mused Una. "Fancy meeting one's own ghost!"

"Cases of such meetings are on record; Shelley's, for instance," said Leighton drily.

"The thing is strange and worth investigating. But," added David laughingly, "I am not an investigator."

"It is fascinating," declared Una emphatically. "Tell us more about it, Uncle Harold. You spoke of an experiment——"

"The experiment, by all means," said David. "Just what is it?"

"Trapping a ghost," was the laconic answer.

"And if you succeed in trapping it——?"

"Ah, then—science generally leaves its ghosts to take care of themselves. It's a good rule."

"You say you are going to trap a ghost: you don't really mean that," protested Una.

"Remember, there are two kinds of ghosts. As a scientist I am not interested in the ghosts of the dead. If they exist outside of fairy tales and theology let some one else hunt them. But I am interested in the other and more profitable kind—the ghosts of the living."

"I don't understand," said David.

"It needs explanation. Remember what I said as to the phenomena presented by the dreamer, the hypnotic subject, the dipsomaniac, the narcomaniac. In each of these cases one human mind seems capable of division

into two independent halves. And each half seems to forget, or to be ignorant of the doings of its mate. Now, I am hunting for this Ghost of the Forgotten."

"Sounds romantic," remarked David. "According to your theory, don't you need a hypnotized subject—or at least a dipsomaniac—for your experiment?"

"No. The Ghost of the Forgotten lurks in all of us. The man or woman in whom this Ghost is not to be found is exceptional. I doubt if such a being exists—a being whose Book of the Past is as clear, as legible, as his Book of the Present."

"But, your experiment, Uncle," demanded Una; "show it to us."

"I need help for a satisfactory trial. An experiment isn't a picture, or a book, you know. It needs a victim of some kind. What do you say, David?" he asked, turning abruptly to him.

"You want me for the victim?" laughed David. "I'm ready. Feel just like my namesake before he tackled that husky Philistine. Tell me what I'm to do."

They were standing at the fireplace, Una with one arm through her lover's, the other resting on her uncle's shoulder. A scarcely perceptible frown clouded Leighton's features before he accepted David's offer.

"I merely want you to answer some questions," he said finally. "You will think them trivial; but I want you to answer them under unusual conditions. Let me show you my latest prize and explain things."

Leighton strode to the center of the room and thence down to that end of it where the tools of his laboratory were kept. David and Una followed, enjoying the momentary relief from the scrutiny of the old savant, who



was now, apparently, engrossed in his scientific apparatus. There was not much of the latter in sight, and to the novice unfamiliar with the interior of a physicist's laboratory, and who carries away a confused impression of glass and metal jars, tubes, coils of wire, electric batteries, revolving discs, and all the nameless paraphernalia of such a place, the appointments of Harold Leighton's workshop would seem simple enough. Yet, the machine before which Leighton paused comprised one of the newest discoveries in this branch of science. Its sensational purpose was to measure and probe the mind through the purely physical operations of the body.

What appeared to be, at first glance, an ordinary galvanometer stood by itself on a table. Its polished brass frame, its flawless glass cylinder enclosing the coils of wire, recording discs and needle, suggested nothing more than the instrument, familiar to the physicist, by which an electric current is measured and tested. Connected with this galvanometer, however, was a curious contrivance consisting of a mirror, over the spotless surface of which, when the machine was in operation, a ray of light, projected from an electrified metal index, or finger, moved back and forth. The exact course of this ray of light, the twists and turns made by it in traversing the mirror, was transferred by an automatic pencil to a sheet of paper carried on a revolving cylinder. This paper thus became a permanent record of whatever experiment had been attempted.

That the subjects investigated by this unique galvanometer were human and not inanimate was indicated by two electrodes, attached by wires hanging from the

machine, intended to be grasped by the hands of a person undergoing the test. Its use, also, as a detector of human thought and emotion, and not of mechanical force, was described by its name—the Electric Psychometer.

## IV

### THE GHOST OF THE FORGOTTEN

MODERN rack and thumbscrew," exclaimed David, eyeing curiously the machine whose gleaming surface of glass and polished metal was in striking contrast with the somber oratory.

Harold Leighton paid no heed to the comment. He was apparently too busied with some detail in the complicated mechanism before him to attend to anything else. David and Una, on the other hand, were more amused than impressed with the odd kind of entertainment chosen for this memorable evening of their betrothal by the eccentric scientist, although every now and then some unexpected bit of irony from him came disconcertingly enough.

"Why should people, whose lives are blameless, think of racks and thumbscrews when they see a simple machine like this?" he asked suddenly, taking up David's apparently unnoted exclamation. Not waiting for an answer, he went on, as if with a lecture to which they had been invited to listen.

"So far as I know this machine is the first of its kind to reach this country. It is an ingenious development of certain laws psychologists have been using for some



time in their experiments, and is based on a theory that is, roughly, something like this:

"A thought is a part of the body that gives it birth. Thinking is not confined to the brain. Like the assimilation of food, it involves man's entire physical nature. In cases of exaggerated thought or emotion—intense grief, fear, joy—the physical effects are obvious. The scientist, however, claims that the physical result from a mental cause is not confined to these extreme cases. A thought, the presence of which is not perceptible in gesture, facial expression, or the slightest visible emotion, is, nevertheless, communicated physically to every part of the body. Throw a stone into a pool of water. If the stone is large, the waves caused by it can be seen until they spend themselves on the shore; if it is small, the resulting ripples become invisible long before that. The point is, the ripple exists, whether we see it or not, just as does the wave, until it has run its course.

"A thought, in its physical effect, is like the stone thrown into a pool. If it is a big, exaggerated thought, the agitation produced is outwardly visible. If it is small, more subtle, less sensational, its physical effects are invisible, although, theoretically, reaching in ripples to the extremities of the body. Hence, the psychologist's problem is: to detect and measure these invisible, intangible ripples of the mind.

"This machine, my 'ghost-hunter,' solves the problem. A Russian scientist discovered that an electric current passing through the body is affected by any abnormal physical, or nervous, activity there encountered. Thought is a form of electric impulse and would, therefore, modify any other electric force crossing its path. Hence, Tar-

chanoff's law. Its practical application means, the literal measurement of our mental ripples. And this is done by the psychometer."

"How?" asked David.

"It's very simple. You hold these electrodes in your hands. An electric current is turned on and passes through you. While you are thus charged with electricity, I throw the stone, the thought, into your mind. The degree, or quality, of disturbance caused by this thought modifies the electric current, the varying agitation of which is made visible by the movements of an electric finger across this mirror. From there it is recorded on the sheet of paper in this cylinder."

"What a horrible contrivance!" exclaimed Una.

"I see how it works," mused David, "except for one thing. How do you introduce the thought you want to measure?"

"If I explain that the experiment wouldn't be possible," said Leighton with a laugh. "The thought must come through unconscious suggestion, or our Ghost of the Forgotten will refuse to appear. In a way, it is like a game—and is more interesting than most games. Did you ever play the game of twenty questions?"

"I have," interjected Una. "It's this way. Something—a book, a piece of furniture, anything at all—is chosen by one set of players to be guessed by the other set. Then the set who know the secret have to answer twenty questions about it, asked by the other side. The questions sound silly, but they usually discover the secret."

"Is your experiment like Una's game?" asked David.

"Not exactly. Sit down in this chair and you'll see."

Seated as directed, the psychometer stood a little back and at one side of him.

"Now," said Leighton, giving him the electrodes, "hold these, one in each hand."

"It's like an electrocution!" exclaimed Una. "Are you very uncomfortable?"

"Oh, quite the contrary! Now, Mr. Leighton——"

"Ready? Here goes the current. You will scarcely feel it."

Leighton pulled out a small lever. A faint humming sound was heard. The electric finger on the mirror in the machine became suddenly illuminated.

"Do you feel it?" asked Una.

"Yes; it's rather nice. This hero business is all right, especially when you preside at the performance, Una."

"Now for your game of twenty questions, Uncle Harold. Of course, you are going to let me into the secret?"

"How can I?" he retorted. "David has the secret."

"I have it?" repeated the other, perplexed.

"Certainly. But this isn't exactly a game. You'll find it tedious, Una. Why not stay with Mrs. Quayle in the library until it's over?"

"Nonsense! Of course I'll stay here," she replied firmly.

"What am I to do?" asked David. "Holding these handles is easy enough—but nothing happens."

"Let me explain," said Leighton. "I am going to give you, one at a time, a number of disconnected words. As you hear each word, you must reply with the first word that suggests itself to your mind. For instance, suppose I say 'black.' The word gives rise,

instantly, to some answering mental picture, and that picture will suggest a word with which your experience has associated it. Thus, when I say 'black,' you may think of 'night'; or, if your thought goes by contraries, the word 'white' may occur to you. In any case, tell me the first word that comes into your mind upon hearing my word—and remember that the promptness of your reply is an important factor in the experiment."

"It sounds easy," remarked David. "Let's begin."

On a small table at which he was standing, Leighton placed his watch, a writing-pad and pencil. Seating himself, he commenced the experiment in the way he had proposed, noting each word as he gave it on the pad before him, and marking the number of seconds elapsing before each of David's answers. Una, ensconced in a large armchair, watched the scene intently.

"Theater," was Leighton's first word.

"Music," came the prompt reply.

"Noise."

"Sleep."

"Lion."

"Teeth."

"Sound."

"Desert."

"Ocean."

"Blue."

A long series of similar question and answer-words followed, apparently chosen at random and not indicating any sequence of ideas. Leighton spoke with exaggerated monotony, his eyes fixed on David, his hand moving with mechanical precision as he jotted down the words and the time taken for each reply. Scarcely any agi-

tation was noticeable in the finger of light upon the mirror, and this part of the experiment seemed—at least to Una—a failure.

“I don’t see what the machine has to do with it,” she said, somewhat puzzled. “David could just as well answer your words without holding those things in his hands.”

“Una,” said Leighton, giving this as the next question-word and ignoring the interruption.

David smiled, hesitated a moment before replying, while the electric finger trembled slightly and then moved, slowly and evenly, back and forth across the mirror.

“Light,” he answered softly.

More question-words followed, most of them receiving prompt answers and producing no appreciable effect in the psychometer. It was noticeable, however, that words having to do with places gave a different result—a vibration of the electric finger, indicating, according to the theory, that they awakened a deeper interest than other words in David’s mind.

In experiments of this kind the operator’s choice of words is carefully made, as a rule, and not left to chance. They usually have a certain continuity of meaning. Theoretically, also, the operator’s personality is kept in the background, so that the subject is freed from any emotional impulse save that created in him by the question-words. But there is always the possibility that this personality will unconsciously influence the subject’s mind, which is thus impelled in directions it might not otherwise take. Hypnotism may thus, unintentionally, play a part in an experiment of this kind, and the subject



made to follow, in the words uttered and the degree of emotion displayed, his inquisitor's suggestions.

It would be hard to tell whether hypnotism gradually came into Leighton's experiment with David. Certain it is that as the trial went on a change came over the two men. Their features grew tense, they were as vigilant to thrust and parry in this game of words as two fencers fighting on a wager whose loss would mean much to either of them. In David anxiety was more marked. The electric finger in the psychometer, unconsciously controlled by him, moved more rapidly and with greater irregularity over the face of the mirror. At times it remained fixed in one place; then, with Leighton's utterance of some new word, it would leap spasmodically forward, in a jagged line of light which would be recorded automatically on the cylinder at the back of the machine.

David could not see what was happening in the psychometer. Outwardly he showed no emotion, except the anxiety to hold his own in this word duel with Leighton. Nevertheless, the electric current passing through him registered a series of impressions that grew in variety and intensity. Theoretically, these impressions were David's thoughts and feelings acting upon the electric finger; and thus the line of light traced upon the mirror was really a picture of his own mind.

For Una the affair had lost its first element of comedy. The meaningless words, the monotonous seriousness with which they were uttered, seemed, in the beginning, a delicious bit of fooling improvised for her benefit. She delighted in the original, the unexpected, and nothing, certainly, could be more foreign to the customary betrothal night entertainment than this ponderous pair-



ing of words between her lover and her uncle. The real purpose of the experiment had not impressed her. The talk about ghosts gave an amusing background to it; but this was afterwards spoiled, it is true, by the tedious discussion of psychological problems. Of course, Una assured herself, this experiment—or this game—was a psychological problem, and she felt certain David would solve it, whatever it might be, in the cleverest fashion.

Had Una understood from the first just what Leighton intended by his proposed "ghost-hunt" she would have followed more keenly the details of this novel pastime. As it was, these details appeared to have no intelligible object in view and failed to arouse her interest until some little time had elapsed. Then she began speculating on the meaning of her uncle's disconnected words and wondering why they drew from David just the replies they did. More to amuse herself than anything else she compared the images which these words evidently aroused in David's mind with the images suggested to her.

For "ship," he gave "sky"; she thought of "water." "Mountain" produced "tired"; she would have said "view." Her word for "river" was "rowing"; his "sunshine." He said "mystery" for "Africa"; she, "negroes." His words were never the same as hers, a fact indicating the wide differences in their individual experiences. More singular still, David's words were always remote, in meaning or association, from the question-words to which they were the answer; hers were quite the opposite. Why, she asked herself, did he say "anger" in response to

"India"; "misery" to "temple"; "joy" to "ocean"; "lost" to "guide"; "slave" to "friend"?

As the experiment progressed most of her uncle's words were bound together, Una noticed, by a similarity in character. She even fancied she could detect in them the disjointed bones of a story. Most of these words had to do with foreign travel, and as David was known to have visited many countries it was natural that the test should follow this line, especially as this was a quest for the Ghost of the Forgotten. In this connection it was noticeable that the series of words chosen by Leighton reversed the itinerary which Una was certain David had followed. Thus, the first question-words indicated the English Lake region, where David had ended his travels. Then came various European countries, and after these Morocco, Egypt, Arabia, India, China, the Islands of the Pacific and the western coast of America. Supposing that Leighton had David's actual itinerary in mind, he was going over it by a series of backward steps, and had now reached a point at which, as Una remembered, the long journey began. With each backward step, also, she noted that the agitation of the electric finger in the psychometer increased. David could not see what was happening in the machine behind him, although it was his own emotions that were being recorded there. Why was he so agitated? Why did he try to hide his feelings? Why did these simple words from Leighton have such power over him? As Una asked herself these questions her sympathy for him increased, and she awaited the end of the experiment with anxiety.

Leighton paused after David matched his question-word, "California," with "home." The electric finger

threw a tremulous line of light upon the recording mirror, and in both men the indifference shown when they began this strange game was lacking. The expectancy in David's face changed to defiance as "California" was followed by the question-word "ship." The electric finger gave a swift upward flash, and there was a longer pause than usual before the answer came—"storm." "Pacific" was met by "palm trees"; and these were followed by "land," "Indians"; "hotel," "strangers"; "natives," "lost"; "clew," "wealth."

With the last pair of words the agitation recorded in the psychometer reached its highest point. David's face was pale, his features drawn, his grasp on the electrodes tense. Una could not bear to witness his struggle. Although ignorant of the cause, his suffering was all too evident, and she determined to rescue him at once from her uncle's cruelty. Leighton met her appeal with characteristic coolness, ignoring her demand to bring the experiment to an end. But he changed the sequence of words he had been using.

"Homer" was the next question-word given.

The effect was immediate. David looked at the old man with astonishment. The jerky motion of the electric finger ceased, while instead an even line of light was traced over the mirror. The answer-word came promptly this time: "Iliad."

A series of similar words followed, and as the experiment took this new direction David's nervousness vanished. Then, without warning, the travel series was taken up again; and this time each word came like the blow of a hammer upon a nail that is swiftly and surely driven to its mark.

There was no mistaking the result. David's limbs stiffened, as if to ward off a blow. His look of relief gave place to a hopeless sort of misery; the telltale electric finger jumped forward in exaggerated lines as if to escape from some merciless pursuer.

"South America," demanded Leighton.

"Spaniards," after a pause, was David's answering word.

"Mountains."

"Muleback."

"Lake."

"Gold."

The answers were hesitatingly given, almost inaudible. Again Una protested.

"Stop!" she commanded. "You have no right——"

Leighton waved her imperiously aside.

"Dynamite," he continued, addressing David.

"Darkness," came the hesitating answer.

"Raoul Arthur."

Silence. A weird dance, as of some mocking spirit, seized the electric finger pointing at the mirror. Una knelt at David's side, her hands upon his shoulders. His lips quivered as he looked despairingly at her.

"Guatavita," said Leighton harshly.

No answer. The electrodes slipped from David's grasp. The finger of light became suddenly motionless.

David had fallen, unconscious, in Una's arms.

## V

### THE SEARCH FOR EL DORADO

LEAVE him with me," said Leighton. "Wait for us with Mrs. Quayle."

"No! No!" answered the girl passionately, kneeling beside David, who was lying on the couch. "You have killed him!"

"Don't talk nonsense," he said coldly, yet with sympathy in his keen gray eyes. "This had to be, and I took my own way about it. Now, go. He is all right. He is safe with me."

David drew a long breath. He looked vacantly at Leighton, then turned to Una.

"Do as he says," he whispered.

"David, I will stay with you."

"Not now; I must speak to your uncle."

"David!"

She looked into his eyes, trying to read there the mystery that was parting them.

"It will be better for all of us," said Leighton gruffly.

Unable to hide her fears, Una rose and moved away from them. The boards of the well worn floor creaked harshly as she walked to the far end of the room. Pausing at the door, she looked back.

"I will wait for you," she said.



When the sound of her footsteps died away, David turned to the old man, who was busied with his scientific apparatus.

"Well, how do you feel?" asked Leighton, gathering up the notes which were strewn on the little table.

"Curiously here," replied David, drawing his hand across his forehead. Then he asked: "How did you know?"

"That's easily answered. About two years ago I read, in the *Journal of Psychology*, a paper by your friend, Raoul Arthur, describing the strange mental effect produced on a young man by a dynamite explosion in a South American mine. Arthur is something of an authority in abnormal psychology, and his report of the accident interested me. The name of the young man was not given. I made inquiries long before our chance meeting with you in England. I learned, among other things, who the young man was. Before we met on the Derwentwater, I had watched you at the hotel."

"You wrote to Raoul Arthur?"

"I did not," he answered drily. "A newspaper account of the accident gave me the clue I needed. According to this account, you were killed in the mine explosion, and no trace of your body or clothing was found. It was long afterwards, in Arthur's report, that your reappearance, under peculiar circumstances, was described. Since then I have learned of your travels. But I have noticed that you always avoid any reference to your South American experiences. So, I appealed to the psychometer."

Leighton, absorbed in his notes, was apparently un-



aware of the eagerness with which David followed his explanation.

"It's all very simple," mused the young man. "And yet, it seemed like necromancy."

"Science is not necromancy."

"But the report," urged David; "I didn't know Raoul had written a report."

"You know he is a psychologist, a hypnotist?"

"Yes," was the answer, with something of a shudder.

"But—why all this elaborate experiment of yours?"

"To prove a theory—and to be certain about you."

"Why?"

"What a question! You expect to marry Una. Before your marriage takes place—if it does take place—I wish to clear up whatever mystery there is hanging over your past."

"And your experiment has shown you——?" David asked in a low voice.

"It confirms the theories of Tarchanoff and Jung," he replied pedantically. "It proves the intimate connection existing between mental and physical phenomena. The personal result is still incomplete. On that side I must know more."

"I will tell you what I can," said David resolutely. "But first—what has Raoul written about me?"

"Merely a reference. Read it after you have told me your story. Our experiment is still unfinished, you know."

"Unfortunately, I can't tell you the very thing you want to know. The series of words in your test seemed to revive some forgotten nightmare; and the horror of it was that this nightmare kept just beyond my reach—

as it always does—its riddle unsolved. This, with your strange knowledge of what had happened, surprised me into this ridiculous weakness.”

“So I thought,” said Leighton. “Now, what do you remember?”

“I’ll have to go back a little. But—you probably know it all, you know so much of my history.”

“Never mind. I want you to prove the truth of what I know.”

David looked at Leighton doubtfully.

“Very well,” he said, “I’ll do what I can.”

Much of his story, as he told it, was decidedly vague. In the main outline, however, it was simple enough, although ending in a mystery that he was unable to clear up.

Three years ago, it seems, David went to work on a project based on a legend belonging to prehistoric America. Traditions of the immense wealth and the civilization found in certain parts of South America by the Spanish conquerors had always fascinated him. And of all these traditions the one telling of El Dorado, the Gilded Man, interested him most.

From the early South American chronicles he learned that, within a few years of Pizarro’s discovery of Peru, three other explorers, starting independently from points on the Caribbean and Pacific coasts, after months of perilous adventure, reached a great tableland in the Upper Andes, where Bogota, the capital of Colombia, now stands. It was “El Dorado” who drew these explorers thither. From the Indians on the coast they had heard stories of the great Man of Gold, who lived among the mountains of the interior and who possessed treasure

so vast that all the wealth of the rest of the world could not equal it. Arrived in this mysterious region, they found, not El Dorado, but a superior race of people, somewhat like the ancient Peruvians, showing, in the barbaric splendor of their temples and palaces, every evidence of wealth and culture. These people, however, known as the Chibchas from their worship of the god Chibchacum, were suspicious of the Spaniards. A war of conquest followed, in which thousands of the natives were massacred and their finest temples and monuments destroyed. Sajipa, the Chibcha king, was subjected to the cruelest torture by his conquerors in their effort to find out from him where he had hidden his treasure. But he proved hero enough to suffer martyrdom rather than reveal the secret. For this he was put to death, and the Spaniards contented themselves with the trivial amount of gold and emeralds extorted from his subjects. They then established themselves in colonies on the Plains of Bogota. The climate was delightful, the land fertile and, as they soon discovered, rich in minerals. From the few surviving Indians they learned some of the native legends. In one of these, the legend of El Dorado, they believed they had the clew to the treasure they had been seeking. This legend was mixed up with the ancient mythology of the Chibchas, and had played a leading part in their religious ceremonial for centuries before the arrival of the Spaniards. It was as follows:

On the edge of the Bogota tableland, not many miles from the city that is to-day the capital of Colombia, there is a lake, Guatavita—the Sacred Lake of the Chibchas. Geologically, it is a pocket formed by a cluster

of spurs near the foot of a conical mountain. It is small, circular in shape, and reaches a central depth of 214 feet. Beneath this lake, according to tradition, lived the national god, Chibchacum. To keep on the right side of this god, to make atonement for the people, a semi-annual feast was observed—the Feast of El Dorado.

Twice a year the king of the Chibchas, in celebrating this Feast, was floated on a raft to the center of the Sacred Lake. He was then stripped of his royal robes, his body anointed with oil and covered with gold dust. Glittering in the sunlight this Gilded Man stood at the edge of the royal raft and was saluted by his subjects, who encircled the shores of the lake, each one bearing an offering of gold and emeralds. Then, as if dazzled by the splendor of their monarch, the people reverently turned their faces away from him and, at a signal from the priests, threw their treasures over their heads into the lake, while the Gilded Man, followed by the heaps of precious stones and metals which were with him on the raft, plunged into its waters. No god ever received such a shower of wealth at his shrine as was thus lavished twice a year, for centuries, on the god Chibchacum. All this wealth, except an insignificant sum that the Spaniards rescued, is to-day, according to the legend, at the bottom of Guatavita.

Besides this semi-annual tribute, it was rumored that at the time of Sajipa's murder the entire remaining treasure of the Chibchas had been thrown into the lake, not as a votive offering, but as a means of hiding it from the Spaniards. It took fifty men, so runs tradition, to carry the gold dust to Guatavita from the king's

treasury alone. All the minor chieftains of the kingdom made a similar sacrifice of their possessions on this occasion.

Years afterwards, the Spaniards, stirred by these stories, attempted to drain the lake. This meant the piercing of earth and rock walls nearly nine hundred feet thick and proved too great an undertaking for the engineering machinery that they had in those days. But before they gave up the work they succeeded in lowering the level of the lake sufficiently to recover a certain amount of treasure. Since that time the secret of Guatavita has remained undisturbed. To solve it David went to Bogota. Raoul Arthur, who had done most of the practical planning for the expedition, went with him.

The motives of the two men engaged in the enterprise were not exactly similar. David, according to what he told Leighton, hoped to solve an archæological riddle and to study a hitherto lost people whose prehistoric civilization equaled that of their neighbors, the Incas of Peru. Arthur, on the contrary, whose fortune was still to be made, regarded it frankly as a mining scheme that promised fabulous returns in money, with a comparatively small amount of risk and labor. The two points of view were not antagonistic, and for a time the friends worked amicably enough together. In Bogota they easily secured from the government the necessary permit to drain Guatavita. But the attractions of the Colombian capital, the hospitality with which they were received, delayed the actual working out of their plans. Fascinated by the romance of this picturesque city and charmed by the unique race of mountaineers inhabiting



it, David postponed the prosaic task of mining, while Raoul became absorbed in studies relating to their proposed venture, meeting people with whom his companion seldom came in contact. Lake Guatavita and its secret was thus, for a time, forgotten—at least by David.

When the social gayeties of the capital were exhausted, he took up in earnest the work he had planned to do. He bought a full equipment of the best mining machinery and hired a large number of laborers. But the enterprise proved more difficult than he expected. The Spaniards, who had worked at the problem three centuries before, were bound to fail on account of their lack of engineering machinery. To empty Lake Guatavita, they tried to cut through the mountain which formed one of the containing walls of that body of water. Under the circumstances their partial success was amazing. The V-shaped gash they cut through the mountain is a proof of their industry, even if it failed of its full purpose. But it did lower the level of the lake—although this result was followed by an unforeseen catastrophe. The sudden release of the water through the channel opened for it left the precipitous shores of the lake unsupported. These shores then caved in, covering whatever treasure there might be in the center of the basin with masses of rock and earth, and thus placing a new obstacle in the way of the future miner.

David and Raoul took the problem from a different angle. They abandoned the old cuttings of the Spaniards and planned a tunnel through the thinnest part of the mountain to the bottom of the lake. In this way they hoped to control the outflow of water, after which, they calculated, the recovery of the treasure would be



a mere matter of placer mining. To do this they had boring machines and dynamite—modern giants, of whose existence the old Spaniards never dreamed.

As a first test of the existence of treasure in the lake, native divers explored some of the shallow places near the shore. A few ancient gold images were thus secured, enough to corroborate the legend regarding Guatavita. These images were curiously carved. One represented a small human figure seated in a sort of sedan chair. Another was a heart-shaped breastplate upon which were embossed human faces and various emblems. Others were statuettes, rude likenesses, probably, of those who threw them into the lake as votive offerings.

These gold tokens spurred on the miners. Work on the tunnel was rushed, and a subterranean passage, several hundred feet in length, directed to a point just below the bottom of the lake, was soon completed. Then a peculiarly hard rock formation was reached that the boring machines could not pierce. To overcome it, dynamite was used.

"Since dynamite was one of the final words in your test," said David, in telling his story to Leighton, "you know that its use in our venture brings the climax of my mining experience. How to explain this climax to you—or to myself—is beyond me.

"When we decided to use dynamite in our excavations, a long fuse was laid from the tunnel's entrance to the unyielding wall at the other end. There this fuse was connected with a dynamite charge placed in the crevice of the rock to be destroyed. Raoul, waiting to set off the fuse, remained at the opening of the tunnel. I was at the further end, looking after the laying of the

dynamite. As I started for the entrance, I was a little behind the others. The latter no sooner gained the outer air than a muffled roar shook the tunnel. The ground swayed, the terrific concussion of air seemed to rend my very brain, and I fell unconscious."

David's story came abruptly to an end. Pale and listless, wearied by the effort to give a coherent account of his experiences, he looked hopelessly at Leighton.

"Well," said the latter, "what then?"

"If I could only tell you!"

"Surely, you remember something—there is some clew——"

"Nothing! Just—darkness."

"Some faint flashes here and there—glimpses of people, scenes, a house, a street—the sound of voices, a word——?"

"Nothing!"

"Try to remember."

"No use. I've tried it too often. It's all a blank. I thought, for an instant, that in your psychometer test the veil would be lifted. Instead—as you know—I went to pieces."

"Very well," said Leighton reassuringly, "let us go back to your story. You were in the tunnel when the dynamite went off. You were thrown to the ground; you lost consciousness. What is the next step in memory?"

"Wait," said David slowly. "The explosion was on the ninth of May. The date was indelibly fixed in my mind; I have verified it since. When I recovered consciousness——"

"You mean, your normal consciousness," interjected Leighton.

"Very well. When I came to myself, then, it was on the morning of the fifth of August."

"Nearly three months afterwards," ruminated the old man. "You found yourself——?"

"Seated in a chair, in a room in a strange house in Bogota."

"Alone?"

"Raoul Arthur was with me. He was bending over me, his eyes fixed on mine, making passes with his hand before my face."

"You were in a hypnotic trance."

"I was coming out of one apparently."

"It would be hard to define your condition. Of course, after the explosion you had been picked up and carried to this house in Bogota, where you had remained, suffering from a severe nervous shock—perhaps concussion of the brain—for three months."

"I had been in that house scarcely an hour before my memory was suddenly revived."

"How do you know that?" demanded Leighton sharply.

"The rainy season was on in August in Bogota. I found myself in my riding dress. My rubber poncho, dripping with rain, was on the floor. My boots, the spurs still attached to the heels, were caked with mud."

"And Arthur told you——?"

"At first, I was bewildered, as one is when suddenly aroused from a long sleep. With full return of consciousness, I asked Raoul how I came to be there. He said he didn't know."

"He must have given some explanation."

"Very little. What he said mystified me more than ever. He declared that a short time before a messenger had come saying that I was in the house, waiting for him."

"Whose house was it?"

"Raoul's. He had rented it two months before and was living in it alone with two servants who were running it for him."

"And this messenger——?"

"An Indian, whom neither of us saw or heard of again, although we inquired high and low."

"The servants must have had information to give?"

"On being questioned they said I had arrived that morning on horseback, with an Indian, who left me there. This Indian was probably the messenger who informed Raoul of my arrival, and who afterwards disappeared. My horse was tethered in the courtyard."

"The clues seem to have been pretty well obliterated," remarked Leighton sarcastically. "But Arthur must have been able to shed some light on the affair."

"He said that when he found me, I did not recognize him and was in a sort of dazed mental state. Then he tried hypnotism. He had often hypnotized me before that, and was thus familiar with my condition while in a trance. Well, as soon as he saw me, after my long disappearance, he declared that I showed every symptom of hypnotic trance. So, he at once tried the usual method for bringing me back to a normal condition—and with complete success."

"In his report Arthur emphasizes that as the singular feature of the case. His account, so far as it goes, agrees with yours. It gives the facts of the explosion, how you

were supposed to be killed, how you disappeared for three months, and how, when you were found, you were in a trance from which he awakened you."

"Does he say that, on coming out of the trance, I could remember nothing that happened during those three months?"

"Yes."

"Well, there's the whole case. You know all that I do about it."

"All that Raoul Arthur knows?"

"All that he says he knows."

"Ah, then you have your doubts?"

"Just a suspicion. I have a feeling that he could tell more about my disappearance than he chose to tell."

"Why did you leave him?"

"I left Bogota the day after I came out of the trance. My distrust of Raoul and the horror that I felt for everything connected with my mysterious experience, made my stay there more than I could stand. But we parted friends, and I've sent him money to go on with the excavations. How he's getting on I can't tell you. I've lost my interest in El Dorado. I won't visit Bogota again."

For some minutes Leighton paced up and down the shadowy room. Then he stopped, with the air of one who has reached a decision.

"Our course is plain," he announced.

"I've tried everything; there's nothing to be done," said the other hopelessly.

"David, you've missed the obvious thing," was the emphatic reply. "We must go to Bogota."

"Go to Bogota!"

"You and I will face Arthur together. If he knows



anything more about this matter, he's bound to tell us. If he doesn't know—if your suspicions are groundless—we'll solve the mystery of those three months some other way. And perhaps we'll stumble upon your Gilded Man at the same time," he added with a chuckle.

"And Una——?"

"She has a way of deciding things for herself. For all I know she may want to go with us."

"Would you consent?"

"There's no reason against it. In a ghost hunt a woman's wit may help."

"Very well, then," said David, new energy in his words and manner.

"You agree?"

"I am entirely in your hands."

"Then we'll take up our interesting little experiment again in the land of El Dorado—and this time we'll run it out to the end."

"Without a psychometer, I hope," said David.



## VI

### EMBOLADORES ON THE MARCH

THERE is in Bogota a street, the Calle de Las Montanas, that meanders down from the treeless foothills of the gray mountain ridge overlooking the city, and broadens out into a respectable thoroughfare before losing itself in the plaza upon which, facing each other diagonally, stand the venerable Catedral de Santa Fe and the National Capitol. This street, resembling the bed of a mountain stream, in the first half mile of its course runs through a huddle of lowly houses whose thatched roofs and white adobe walls seldom reach more than one story in height. The inhabitants of this district are called, in playful irony, by their more prosperous neighbors, "paisanos," fellow-citizens; or else, scornful of compliment, "peons," day-laborers. Here dwell the teamsters of the city, the washerwomen, the tinkers, the runners, the street-sweepers, the beggars, the proprietors of small tiendas, the bootblacks, the vendors of sweets—a mixed army of workers and idlers, who gain a livelihood, as chance favors, by their hands or their wits.

The peon of Colombia is an interesting possibility. He is more Indian than Spanish, but he has developed certain novelties of feature that belong to neither of these parent races. He has something of the savagery

of the one, and the romance of the other; yet he is quite unlike Spaniard or Indian, and when these have disappeared from the mountain republic the peon will take their place. To-day he lacks the energy needed for self-assertion. There have been occasions, however, when this peasant of the Andes has taken the lead in a popular uprising and, although he has usually failed to win what he was after, his reserve of power promises well for the future of his race.

It was the politically awakened peon who was in evidence on a certain morning in Bogota, not so very long ago, at the upper end of the Calle de Las Montanas. The sign of his awakening was to be seen in an unusual commotion among the good-natured "paisanos" of the street, from which an onlooker might reach the astonishing conclusion that some sort of "demonstration" was under way. Revolutionary or otherwise, there are people, it would seem, who engage in these affairs simply through a desire for sociability. Their warlike declarations are really not unamiable. An Andean revolution, indeed, may not be more terrifying than a "fiesta," and is never so noisy. In either case, these people make common cause of their joys or their grievances; and it was unquestionably a sudden burst of neighborliness that brought the inhabitants of the Calle de Las Montanas together on this particular morning.

An army of bootblacks was assembled in the middle of the street. Bogota, ancient seat of the Muyscas, City of the Mountains, is, for some unknown reason, rich in bootblacks. Hence, it was not surprising to find a hundred or more knights of the brush and bottle mustered here. They were of varying age and size, clad in non-

descript rags, over which protectingly flapped the ruana, or poncho, a garment inherited from the Indians, and now universally worn in Spanish America. War's ordinary weapons were lacking in this tattered regiment. Instead of sword and musket each youngster carried in front of him, hanging from his neck, a rude box containing the bottles and brushes needed in his calling. Ordinarily these weapons are harmless enough; but these volunteer soldiers felt that they were adequately armed for whatever adventure might be in the wind. Patriotism—and a ruana—can start any revolution. In expert hands, the vicious twirl of a ruana should bring terror to the most stalwart of foes—and of patriotism there was a generous supply this morning in the Calle de Las Montanas.

Pedro Cavallo, a wiry youth, taller than his fellows, gifted with shrill eloquence, acrobatic gestures, and hence acclaimed the King of the Bootblacks, was the leading spirit of the throng surrounding him.

"Viva Pedro! Por la Patria! Por la Patria! Baja los puercos!" shouted first one and then another in answer to his orders given with all the assurance of royalty.

"Compadres!" he addressed them, switching his cumbersome box of blacking to one side with oratorical cunning; "we will lead the way! We will march to the palace! We will offer ourselves to the President! We will march to the coast, and then we will sweep out the Yankees!"

"Si! Si!" they shrilled in eager response. "Por la Patria! Por la Patria! Mata los Yankees puercos!"

A quizzical spectator, a true Bogotano, robust and red-cheeked, swathed in an ample ruana, echoed the enthusiasm.

"It is an army of emboladores!" he shouted sonorously. "Let the Yankee bull beware!"

Now, "embolador," although it is a word familiarly used in Bogota to designate a bootblack, has for its first meaning "one who puts balls on the tips of a bull's horns," a thing not easy to accomplish, requiring, as it does, the conquest of a traditionally warlike animal. Applied to this Falstaffian army of bootblacks, the irony of the term was broad enough to delight the bystanders, at the same time that it flattered the vanity of those for whom it was intended.

Distances meant little to the emboladores. No matter how far they had to travel, they vowed they would keep going until they met "los Yankees." And, when they did meet them, they had no doubt of what would happen. Confident in their own ability to put the "usurpers" to flight, they had the sympathy of the peons surrounding them.

At this period, immediately following the proclamation of Panama's independence, there was widespread indignation throughout Colombia against the United States. Americans were accused of starting the "revolution" which robbed the mother country of her richest possession, and the Colombian government was accordingly expected to avenge the national honor. The native authorities, lacking money and troops, did not respond to the popular demand, and it was left to the "patriots" to denounce the invading Yankees, and to fit out such volunteer expeditions as the one planned by the emboladores of the Calle de Las Montanas. Bogota, the largest city of the republic, the center of its official life, became the rallying place for political malcontents. A "Sociedad

del Integridad Nacional"—a body of agitators at odds with the native government and bitterly opposed to the United States—had been formed here. This Sociedad had already organized two expeditions against the Yankees and the Panamanians. Both expeditions, made up of the dregs of the city, poorly armed, scantily clad, relying for their food on such contributions as they might pick up along the way, had left for the coast where they planned a guerilla warfare that would bring them, they believed, in triumph to the Isthmus. The third expedition was being engineered by the emboladores, whose enthusiasm and love of adventure made them excellent starters of an uprising. Even the elder peons, skeptical at first of what was going on, soon threw aside their reserve and fell into line with the bootblacks. Cheers greeted each addition to the little army, and it was not long before Pedro Cavallo, "Rey de los Emboladores," headed an eager throng of followers numbering well into the thousands.

What to do with so strange a mob of volunteers might have puzzled a more experienced leader than Pedro. But nothing daunted him. The bigger and the more unruly his army, the greater seemed to be his confidence in himself as its commander. And his royal swagger won unbounded admiration. Grimy children, too young to join the ranks of the emboladores, scurried hither and thither among the bystanders, shrieking with delight at this staging of their favorite "Pedro the King." Women, setting down their bundles under the projecting latticed windows of the houses, talked wonderingly of this sudden glory that had come to a youth whom they had thought skilled in nothing mightier than the blacking of boots.



Solemn greybeards, proprietors of dingy little tiendas, stood in the doorways of their shops, secretly amazed, but still holding themselves grimly aloof from the noisy demonstrations of their neighbors.

"Yankees are pigs," said one of these sellers of sweets, native tobacco and white rum, quoting gloomily the popular estimate of Americans.

"Yes," replied another; "and pigs are easily beaten."

"Truly, that is so," quoth the first philosopher, struck by the turn of a new idea. "Yes, that is so. Even a woman can beat a pig, if the pig has eaten too much."

"Yes, yes, Compadre! And Panama is too much for the hungriest pig."

Then, out of the surging crowd of volunteers, came a stentorian voice:

"Donde vamos, Pedro el Rey?" ("Where shall we go, King Pedro?")

"To the President! To the Palace San Carlos!" shouted Pedro, brandishing a stick snatched from one of the faithful.

As the volunteers had agreed to do this in the first place, the announcement was instantly approved. San Carlos, "the palace," was not far off—a few short blocks this side the principal plaza of the city—and word was quickly passed along to march thither. Still shouting vengeance on all Yankees, the emboladores, followed by a mob of peons, moved down the street, encouraged by the primitive jests and delighted cheers of the bystanders.

Early as it was, San Carlos was ready for this unusual visit. Although it was popularly known as "the palace"—as all residences of high officials are in Colombia—this large rambling structure of stone and plaster was in



no way distinguished from the buildings that elbowed it at each side. Its dilapidated walls ran sheer to the narrow sidewalk, overlooking which were several balconies of the kind commonly used in Spanish-American buildings. A large square opening, guarded by rude, heavily timbered doors, formed the entrance to this simple executive mansion which was built around a huge courtyard, or patio. From this patio two broad flights of carpeted stairs led to the living rooms and offices above. This arrangement of rooms, balconies, patio—the fountain in the middle of a bed of flowering shrubs and plants, perpetually spraying a moss-grown cupid; the brick walls; the inner corridor supported on arches of masonry and forming the boundary of the four-sided court—all this one finds, with slight variation, in the home of the average Bogotano, as well as in the official "palace." The unique feature of San Carlos, growing out of the very heart of this ancient dwelling, is a huge walnut tree, rising some forty or fifty feet above the patio, overtopping the adjacent roofs, and marking this, better than could any national emblem, as the presidential residence.

Within the gateway of the palace and at the foot of the stone steps leading to the corridor above, there is always a guard of soldiers. On the morning of the visit of the emboladores this guard was greatly increased in numbers and was commanded by a youth whose resplendent uniform was in striking contrast with the dingy, ill-fitting apparel of his men. As the tramp of the peons echoed along the street, the soldiers marched hastily across the patio and drew up outside the entrance to the palace. Here, waiting groups of idlers shouted with

delight as the bootblacks, King Pedro in the lead, rounded the corner of San Carlos.

"They will polish the Yankees," declared one admirer.

"No, they have come for the president's boots."

"Emboladores! Emboladores! Beware the bull!"

"Here, King Pedro, give us a shine!"

"Don Pedro is busy; he's lost his brush."

"He's keeping it for his Yankee customers."

"He will take Panama with it."

The unterrified Pedro, meeting this raillery with serene indifference, halted his men before the entrance to the palace and addressed the captain of the guard.

"We have come to see Don Jose."

"But, muchacho," replied the captain affably, "that is impossible. His Excellency is busy. Who are you?"

"Pedro, El Rey de los Emboladores!" piped up several volunteers.

"Ah!" said the captain, saluting profoundly. "And what do you want with his Excellency, Majestad?"

"To tell him we will fight the Yankees who have stolen Panama."

"I will tell his Excellency this," was the grave reply. "Of course, he will be pleased."

While these two youths were talking—for after all, the magnificent toy captain was quite as young as the King of Brush and Bottle—the curtains of the large window above were drawn aside and a tall, spare figure, in a long frock coat, stepped slowly forth on the balcony. He was an old man, with a close-clipped beard and moustache, sharp, thin features, and an owlish way of peering through his large, gold-bowed spectacles that made one look involuntarily for the ferule of the schoolmaster held

behind his back. This elderly personage had been, indeed, one of the notable pedagogues of Bogota in his day, a fact which, joined to his scholarly achievements in his country's literature, seemed to his neighbors a sufficient reason for voting him in as the proprietor of San Carlos. To this decision the less powerful and more numerous citizens of the republic could make no effective protest.

On this particular morning it was the schoolmaster, wearing his most indulgent smile, who faced the bootblacks in the street below him. As soon as they caught sight of the familiar figure they gave him an enthusiastic greeting, the democratic flavor of which he seemed to relish. Popular applause had been lacking in Don Jose's career, and since the troubles over Panama had broken in upon his quiet cultivation of the muses, it looked very much as if his countrymen's indifference might turn to open hostility. Thus, the friendly greetings of a rabble of bootblacks and peons was not to be despised.

"Don Jose! Don Jose!" they shouted cheerfully, with that peculiar upward inflection by which the Spanish-American gives a warmth to his salutation not suggested by the words themselves. "El Presidente de Colombia! Viva Don Jose! Baja los Yankees!"

To all of which Don Jose, one long thin hand thrust stiffly between the breast buttons of his coat, listened in dignified silence, inwardly gratified by these boisterous visitors.

"Bueno, bueno," he said in a high querulous voice; "I am very glad to see you, my friends. This is a great honor. But, what can I do for you?"

"Send us to Panama!" bawled Pedro, acting as spokesman for his men.

"Dear me!" exclaimed the old man, enjoying the situation and ignoring its political consequences. "Panama is far off—and why should I send such good citizens away from Bogota?"

"Por la Patria! Por la Patria! To fight the Yankees!"

"The Yankees? But why——"

"They have stolen Panama. They are pigs!"

"What a people!" he exclaimed, nonplussed. "I am sorry for that. Well, if I send you, what will you do?"

"Esta buenol Don Jose will send us to kill the Yankees!" they shouted enthusiastically.

"No! No! I didn't say that!" he expostulated; then continued, as if by rote: "The government will look after Panama. If fighting is needed to preserve the republic, the army will do its duty"—an assurance which increased the martial swagger of the gold-braided toy captain, although unappreciated by his men.

"We will fight with the army, Don Jose," declared Pedro. "We will drive out the Yankees and save Panama."

"Viva Colombia! Baja los Yankees!" shouted the peons. As this voiced the popular sentiment, and as Don Jose's loyalty in the Panama affair had been questioned by some of his enemies, no sufficiently discreet reply occurred to the puzzled schoolmaster, whose intellectual gifts, moreover, were lacking in the quick give-and-take needed for street oratory. So, smiling benignly, and somewhat fatuously, upon the noisy rabble, he thrust his hand deeper into his coat, peered more owlishly through his gold-rimmed glasses and, forgetting its future

possibilities, got such enjoyment as he could out of the novel situation.

The volunteers exploded with joy over the president's apparent approval of their demand. Had Pedro cared to stop for further talk the impatience of his comrades would have prevented him. Although these peons had no definite plan, they were looking for something more exciting than an exchange of opinions with this old grey-beard of San Carlos. A march through the city, and then on to Panama, seemed as good a program as any to men who were indifferent to the dry details of geography. There were more cries of "Down with the Yankees!" and cheers for Don Jose. Then, before that bewildered statesman could take himself off, his unwashed admirers filed past his balcony, leaving the toy captain and his men to close the gates they had so courageously guarded.

Under other skies and among a more vindictive people, a roving crowd of peons, clamorous for war and threatening all who opposed them, might be regarded with some alarm. But the mildness of the Andean character, its dislike for actual bloodshed, lessened Bogota's danger. Even the timid Don Jose was not apprehensive. But there were others who thought it wiser to keep these peons away from Americans living in Bogota. Not that anything would really happen—past experiences seemed to prove the harmlessness of this kind of patriotism. When the second expedition left for the Isthmus, for instance, an American, looking for novel impressions, had posed the volunteers before his camera and snapshotted them to his heart's content while they were denouncing "los Yankees." But one mob of patriots may be quite unlike another, and it so happened that when



King Pedro's army of emboladores, in its aimless wanderings after leaving the Palace of San Carlos, stumbled upon a native of the United States, the encounter became a very lively one indeed.

As a rule plenty of Americans are in Bogota. Some go there to do business for the merchant houses which they represent; some have their own local interests, others are after those tempting government "concessions" granted to the disinterested person who develops the natural resources of the country by monopolizing them. When the Panama "revolution" came, most Americans left Bogota, conscious that it was not a promising time to seek aid from the national treasury for their ventures. Those who were unable to leave, stayed within their respective hotels whenever a popular uprising seemed likely.

It was down a blank little side street, leading nowhere in particular, lined with modest one-storied houses, in a quiet district unfrequented by foreigners, that the roving peons met the one American who had failed to conceal himself on this particular morning. After leaving San Carlos, Pedro had turned his men into the Plaza de Catedral, where they had clattered along the wide concourse, pausing to make a few fiery speeches before the capitol, whose unroofed courts—the building was unfinished at that time—and majestic Doric columns seem meant for oratory. From here they had gone the zigzag length of the principal business street. Then tiring of their progress through an unresponsive city, they had started to find their way back to the Calle de Las Montanas, choosing for this purpose the obscure Calle de Las Flores.



At their approach the street was practically deserted, all the doors opening on it carefully barred and, in some instances, even the blinds of the windows drawn. Thus, it happened that a tall man, muffled in a ruana, wearing a wide sombrero, and with his back against the entrance to one of the houses, became unavoidably conspicuous as the throng of emboladores surged along the roadway abreast of him.

"Viva Colombia!" shouted Pedro, giving the usual greeting. "Baja los Yankees!"

Instead of answering in a like strain of enthusiasm, the man addressed tossed the loose end of his ruana over one shoulder, showing, as he did so, a pallid face on which played a contemptuous smile.

"Soy un Americano," he replied composedly, glancing at Pedro and then turning his eyes, which were singularly piercing, from one to another of those crowding about him.

"Un Yankee! Un Yankee! Baja los Yankees!"

The cry was followed by a threatening movement of the emboladores toward the man whose attitude seemed to be a challenge to them.

"Halt!" yelled Pedro. "I know this senor. Give him a chance. If he cheers Colombia, we will let him go. If he refuses, he is prisoner. Now, Senor Yankee—viva Colombia!"

The emboladores gave a lusty cheer. It was met with scornful silence by the man who had declared himself a Yankee.

"Si! Si! Pedro el Rey!" they all shouted. "He is an enemy to Colombia. He is prisoner!"

The wily Pedro unwilling to risk his position by deny-

ing the demands of his followers, yet fearing to aid in an act of violence, diplomatically said nothing. The defiant American, meanwhile, regarded the peons with a disdain that enraged them, although checking, through its very audacity, their hostility.

"I am not a Colombian," he said quietly; "I am not an enemy to Colombia. But I won't cheer against the Yankees."

"Un Yankee! Un Yankee!" they retorted. "A Yankee thief come for our gold!"

"There is truth in that," he laughed sardonically. "I want gold that you are too lazy to get for yourselves—just as you were too lazy to keep Panama."

"Un loco! He is insane!" cried Pedro in disgust. "Let us go!"

"No! No!" yelled the angry mob. And amid cries of "Loco! Demônio! Yankee! Puerco!" those in the front ranks made a lunge at the man whose exasperating coolness had kept them at bay, while a shower of missiles came from the peons who hovered in the rear.

But the attack was skilfully met. Tripping up his first two assailants and warding off the blows of a third, the Yankee, smiling derisively, stealthily passed his left hand along the ponderous door against which he was leaning. This street door, as is usual in Colombian houses, had a small "postigo," or wicket, large enough to admit one person at a time, and opening much more readily than the unwieldy mass of timber of which it formed an insignificant part. Having found the latch of this wicket, the Yankee gave it a quick backward thrust, stepped lightly over the threshold and closed and barricaded this scarcely revealed entrance behind him.

A storm of oaths followed his escape. Then, not content with this vent to their anger, the peons, using such stones and weapons as came to hand, rushed upon the wooden barricade standing between them and their prey, at the same time calling upon the inhabitants of the house to let them in. These Colombian doors, however, are built to withstand a stout siege, and the din might have been indefinitely prolonged had it not come to an abrupt and unexpected conclusion.

Three sharp blows upon the door were given from within. Then a clear feminine voice was heard above the uproar.

"Stand back, Senores! I will open."

There was a dead silence. This time it was the great door itself that swung slowly open. There was no sign of the escaped Yankee in the wide corridor beyond. In his stead there stood, unattended, unprotected, a woman.

She was clad in a long robe of white, her dark hair flowing unconfined down her shoulders. Her bare arms, exquisitely molded, and of a tint that vied with her dress in purity, were crossed upon her breast. There was no fear in her eyes as she faced the abashed men and boys before her.

"This is my house, Senores," she said calmly. "What do you want?"

Involuntarily the leaders of the mob fell back, awed by the girl's courage and dignity. There was a murmur of voices, ending in a chorus of admiration and homage.

"La Reina! La Reina!" they cried. "La Reina de los Indios!"

Then the sharp-witted Pedro, resuming command over

his ragged troops, stepped forth, waving to the others to keep silence.

"It is nothing, Senora," he said, bowing with an awkward grace that played sad pranks with the box of blacking hanging from his neck. "We are patriots of Colombia marching to Panama. We mean no harm to you." Then, turning to the emboladores, he shouted, with his old enthusiasm:

"Por la Patria! Por la Patria! Viva la Reina! Baja los Yankees!"

The crowd took up the familiar call, and with one of those quick changes of sentiment that sometimes sweeps over such gatherings, fell into a march, cheering the motionless "Reina de los Indios" as they filed past her, and leaving the Calle de los Flores to its accustomed dreams and quiet.

## VII

### LA REINA DE LOS INDIOS

**F**ELICITA, where is this Senor?"

"Ah, Dios mio! safe enough, in the sala. But for thee—nina Sa'pona, how scared I've been! And they called thee queen, thou who art our queen indeed, beautiful, brave one! But thou shouldst not do this—not for so ugly a senor—my beautiful nina!"

With the great door closed, and the noise from the peons growing fainter in the distance, the stern dignity of the Indian girl vanished before the simple talk of her old nurse. Queen of the Indians, as the peons called her, this girl might be—although why they called her so they would find it difficult to tell—but for the faithful creature, with her eager caresses and affectionate words, royalty, real or imaginary, scarcely counted.

"There you are, foolish Felicita, always scared at something! Danger? What danger? Only a greeting from those who are as fond of me as thou art. Now, to thy work. I must speak with this troublesome Yankee. Many a day it is since I have seen him here. And then—Felicita, I am dying of hunger."

Shaking her head at her mistress's lack of caution, the old nurse hobbled down the gloomy corridor and into the sunny patio, fragrant with jasmine and sweet rose,

where two Indian girls, seated upon the flags surrounding the opening of a central cistern, were crushing corn in the primitive stone hand mills of their race.

Resuming something of her stateliness of mien, the youthful "Reina de los Indios" turned to the right along a passage-way leading off from the main corridor into the sala, or principal living room of the house. This was more scantily furnished than such apartments usually are in Bogota. All that it had was of the plainest—half a dozen cheap rocking chairs, a straight-backed cane settee, a tall pier-glass, ornamented at the top and sides with meaningless gilt stucco work, and a dark walnut cabinet, carved in elaborate hunting design, with massive spiral pillars supporting the heavily panelled sides and front—the only object in the room giving evidence either of taste or wealth. Even the tiled floors were bare, save for a few well worn petates (Indian mats) which failed to supply that feeling of comfort provided in this chilly climate by the thick woollen rugs and carpets generally in use.

Awaiting her entrance stood the Yankee whom she had rescued from the emboladores. Confronted by his ragged assailants he had shown an admirable coolness; in the presence of this young girl his manner lacked that air of confidence he had so readily assumed in the face of danger. He was ill at ease; his glance shifted from one object to another in the room, his sombrero was tightly clenched in his hand, he avoided the steady gaze of his rescuer. Yet there was in his attitude toward her an indefinable homage, due, perhaps, to the queenly rank that others accorded her, or else to the rare feminine loveliness, the subtle power of which few could escape.



"Senorita, you have done me a great service," he said. "I was on my way to see you when I had that brush with the peons. That is my excuse for taking refuge in your house and exposing you to danger. Will you forgive me? Will you——"

"Ah, my good Don Raoul!" she interrupted. "What questions! And from you! Of course, if I was of service to you just now, I am glad."

"It is good to hear you say that, Senorita," he replied with evident relief. "I was afraid things might be different between us. You see, you disappeared so completely. You have not been in Bogota for months, for years, Senorita. And then, to-day—at last—I heard of your arrival. I wanted to see you. I have not forgotten you in all this long time, you may be sure, Sajipona!"

A faint flush overspread the girl's delicate features; a strange look kindled within her dark eyes.

"It is well, Don Raoul," she said in a low voice.

"And here you are, still the Queen—beautiful, mysterious!" he exclaimed.

"You know I am not a queen," she murmured.

"Why, even now they called you so. Those jackals felt your power—just as I do, beautiful Sajipona!"

"Enough, Senor! Titles and flatteries I neither care for nor deserve are a mockery in my own house."

"The title is yours by tradition, if not by right. As for flatteries——"

"We do not live by traditions," she interrupted.

"To me, at least, you are La Reina de los Indios."

"Ah, well, Senor," she said with a low laugh; "every queen, I fancy, should have at least one subject. And

now—supposing that I am this queen you talk of—what is it you want of me?”

“We always used to be friends, Sajipona. Can we not be friends still?”

“There’s another strange question! But—surely you did not come here to ask me that? There is something else, Don Raoul,” she added, regarding him intently.

“It is that, first of all. And then—I had it in mind to tell you that my friend is returning to Bogota—David Meudon.”

“David Meudon,” she repeated, as if pondering the name, looking steadily at Raoul the while.

“But then—what is that to me, Senor?” she asked.

“You remember him?”

“Yes, of course I remember him. He has been away a long time, hasn’t he?” Then, after a pause: “Why does he come back?”

“To solve a mystery—so he writes me.”

“A mystery?”

“He calls it a mystery,” laughed the other. “You see, when we were living here together he disappeared for three months. We thought he had been killed by a dynamite explosion. Surely, you have heard of it, Senorita?”

“Yes—I think everyone has heard of it. And then, at the time, there were rumors. For instance, I heard—I heard who exploded the dynamite.”

“Sure enough, there were all kinds of rumors. But, of course, the whole thing was an accident, a horrible accident, that nearly cost David his life. He didn’t heed the signal in time—or something went wrong—the signal or the dynamite. Anyway, he wasn’t seen or heard of again for three months. We all thought he must have

been blown to bits. Then, a curious thing happened. One morning I found him in my house, in a sort of trance."

"Well?"

"When he came out of the trance, he declared he could remember nothing of what he had been through. Those three months were a blank in his memory."

"And then——?"

"He left Bogota, declaring he would never come back. That was just three years ago."

"But——"

"Yes, now he is coming back—with some friends—to solve this mystery, so he says."

"What mystery, Senor?"

"Why," replied Raoul slowly, looking at her intently; "the mystery of those three months when he was supposed to have been in a trance."

"What is a trance, Don Raoul?" asked the girl innocently.

Raoul laughed.

"Ah, that would be hard to explain to a queen of the Indians," he said. "A trance is not exactly a sleep, for a man may talk and travel and do things, just like other men, when he's in a trance. But when he is himself again, he remembers nothing of all that happened when he was in the trance."

"Then you think he was in a trance during those three months when he disappeared from Bogota?"

"Yes."

"And that he has forgotten all that happened to him in that time?"

"Perhaps."

"Could he ever remember?"

"There is only one way in which he could."

"How is that?"

"If he could return to the same scenes and conditions through which he passed during those three months."

"But for that you would have to know, of course, what those scenes and conditions were?"

"Exactly, *Senorita*."

"Really, it is all very interesting," she said dreamily. "I have heard something like it in fairy tales, I think; but not in real life. And now—why do you tell all this to me, *Senor*?" she asked, as if struck by a novel idea.

"Ah, *Sajipona*," he replied with a smile; "I have told you merely in answer to your own questions. You have shown that—for some reason or other—you are interested."

"Interested? Why, of course I am interested—if for no other reason, simply because you are. This David Meudon, you say, left Bogota three years ago? Strange that he should leave so suddenly—and with his work in this country unfinished!"

"I can't tell how much you know of David," he said musingly. "But there is every reason why you, more than anyone else, should be interested in the man who attempts to solve the secret of Guatavita—*Sajipona*."

There was no mistaking the emphasis placed on the girl's name; nor was there any disguising the effect its peculiar pronunciation had upon her. *Sajipona* looked at Raoul in alarm, then turned from him in manifest confusion. Presently, she gave a low laugh and her eyes sought his again.

"Ah, you Yankees are strange people," she said.

"Some say, you are only money makers. But, it appears, you are more than that; for you listen to foolish legends, like the rest of us—and you believe them."

"Yes, I believe this one, Sajipona."

"Does the man who so strangely lost his memory by your dynamite explosion believe this one?" she asked laughing.

"I don't know. Perhaps he never heard it."

"Well, it's very interesting, anyway—I mean, about the trance and the dynamite. I want to hear the end of it. You will surely come again, won't you? And tell me when your friend arrives in Bogota," she added, giving him her hand.

"You are ever the queen; you dismiss me from your presence," he complained, taking her hand, nevertheless, and kissing it.

"The streets are safe for you now, Senor," she said.

"Thanks to you, La Reina!"

"Ah, I would do much more for you than that, as you know, Don Raoul!" she exclaimed, an arch smile giving to her beautiful features a rare flash of piquancy. "And now—Adios, Senor!"

"Surely, not 'Adios,' but—until the next time, Sajipona," he replied, as he bowed himself from the sala.

Raoul's belief in the legend involved in Sajipona's name marked a radical change which he had undergone since he arrived in Bogota. To his keen, logical mind the proposal to enlist in a quest for the long lost El Dorado seemed, at first, far too quixotic to be taken seriously. But he humored the idea, originating in David's fondness for studies touching the borderlands of romance, in the hope that he would divert a purely fanci-



ful project into more profitable channels. Later on, however, he was himself caught by the practical possibilities lurking in the old Chibcha legend. Hence, it followed that while David was enjoying the picturesque life of the little mountain capital, Raoul was delving in musty records, running down old traditions, and studying the topography of the Bogota tableland with a degree of patience as to details that the subject had rarely received. For days at a time he burrowed in the crumbling archives of the Museo Nacional, an unpretentious little edifice, not far from the palace of San Carlos, in which were stored, pell-mell, practically every evidence that remained of Colombia's prehistoric civilization. Here, with only the grey, shrivelled mummies of two ancient kings of the Chibchas to watch him, he had reconstructed, as best he could, the past of this vanished race of people, had convinced himself of their wealth, scarcely any of which had fallen into the hands of the Spanish, and had laid his plans for discovering a treasure which had balked every explorer before him.

Combined with these studies in the National Museum and in the vicinity of Lake Guatavita, Raoul had busied himself with the peons of the neighborhood. From these primitive people he learned enough to corroborate the main features in the Chibcha tradition as handed down by Castellanos, Pedro Simon, Piedrahita, and other chroniclers of the Spanish Conquest. In addition, he unearthed the curious legend that the Sacred Lake would never yield up its treasure except to one in whose veins flowed the blood of the Chibcha kings. This bit of prophetic romance had come, it was said, from father to son through the four centuries following the martyrdom of



the last of the zipas. He was told, also—and it added to the fantastic character of the prophecy—that a secret, known only to the zipas and their direct descendants, attached to Lake Guatavita, and that by means of this secret the treasure hidden beneath its waters would be discovered.

Raoul at first paid little heed to this part of the legend. It had too strong a flavor of latter-day romance to go for more than a recent addition to the main story of the wealth of the Chibcha kings and their peculiar religious customs. The persistence of the idea, however, the belief in its truth on the part of those repeating it, gradually excited his interest and led him into all kinds of theories as to the existence and recovery of the Guatavita treasure.

That so fanciful a legend could have won even the partial belief of so ingrained a skeptic as Raoul seems at first absurd on the face of it. But most of us can recall instances enough of similar lapses from the hypercritical to the over-superstitious to make this one not altogether incredible. As often happens, also, in such cases—as with those otherwise reasonable persons who believe in fortune-telling, omens, apparitions, etc.,—this bit of superstition, having once lodged itself in Raoul's mind, increased in importance, opening up an absorbing field for his love of psychological novelties, until it finally became a monomania, an obsession, as the scientists call it.

These ancient zipas, he argued, were the chieftains of a superior race of people. In the annual tribute from the royal treasury to the national god, who was supposed to live at the bottom of Lake Guatavita, they catered to the credulity of their subjects while, in reality, laugh-

ing in their sleeves at them, so to speak, all the time. Men of their intelligence were not apt literally to throw away wealth they had themselves amassed, and which they must consider as belonging to them and to their descendants. But as they—apparently—did throw it away, it was more than likely that they used some kind of hocus-pocus, known only to themselves, by means of which the God Chibchacum—in whose existence they did not believe—was cheated of his annual tribute. How they practiced this deception they must surely have told their children. The coming of the Spaniards, however, and the overthrow of the ancient dynasty, had made of the whole affair a greater secret than ever. It would be handed down from one generation to another so long as there were descendants of the zipas; but these survivors of the royal line would find it increasingly difficult, owing to the presence of the Sapniards, to take the steps needed to recover their ancestral treasure.

There was some plausibility in Raoul's reasoning, enough, perhaps, to excite the romancer's interest, but scarcely that of the practical man of affairs to whom are broached the details of a mining venture. Conviction grew, however, with Raoul, whose investigations were confined thenceforward less to the archæological aspects of the problem and more to the task of discovering the whereabouts of the living descendants of the zipas.

These speculations and the singular inquiry into which they had drawn his companion excited only a mild interest in David. The latter, strangely enough, enchanted with the picturesque novelty of the cloud-city in which he found himself, felt less of the antiquarian's zeal than when Bogota was a remote geographical possibility. Per-

haps it was the stimulus of mountain air, a bracing climate, that got him out of his habitual bookishness. Here, at any rate, there was neither the warmth nor the color of the tropics to entice him to the indolent dreaming that one of his temperament might easily yield to in the lowlands of Colombia. The peculiar lustre of the grey-green Bogota tableland, the cool crystalline atmosphere, invited him to continual physical exercise. For days at a time he went on long horseback rides. Then, tiring of this, and feeling something of the restraint experienced by the stranger who exerts himself abnormally in the rarefied air of the higher Andes, he fell into the easy habits of the pleasure-loving Bogotano. Muffled warmly in a ruana, he strolled comfortably about the streets of the city, amused by the chaffering of peons in the market place, enchanted by the quaint and varied architecture of the houses and public buildings, the grotesque paintings and bas-reliefs in the churches; or else he would sit by the hour in the open window of some cafe on the Cathedral Esplanade, watching the gay throng of idlers and politicians for whom this is a favorite rendezvous. The dust and cobwebs of the Museo did not attract this former dabbler in antiquities, who abandoned himself eagerly to the fleeting impressions gathered from an altogether pleasing environment. And Raoul, naturally secretive, gave him the vaguest outline only of the course and the result of his studies.

The discovery that made the deepest impression on Raoul took place under circumstances which intensified his superstitious feeling in regard to everything connected with the buried treasure. He was on one of numerous trips to Lake Guatavita. Riding alone, he

reached the gloomy body of water toward nightfall. Tethering his horse near the trail at the edge of the plain over which he had ridden, he approached the lake on foot, his mind penetrated by the absolute silence of the place. He had come for no specific purpose except to examine further the old Spanish cutting that gashes the great hill which originally rose, a solid wall of rock, above the unknown depths of the waters. Through this narrow cleft, on the instant that it was completed three centuries ago, a mighty torrent had hurled itself into the valley beyond. As this torrent subsided and the lake shrank to its present compass, a wide margin of precipitous shore was left bare to the scrutiny of treasure seekers. Even after the lapse of centuries this portion of the lake's basin still shows the ravages wrought by the Spaniards. It remains a gaunt, jagged surface of rock and flinty gravel, unclothed by tree or shrub—an ancient sanctuary whose violation defies the repairs of time.

Raoul smiled contemptuously at these evidences of the rude labors of the early Spaniards. With modern science to back him he would not attack the problem in this way. He would pierce this ancient secret to its heart by subtlety, not brute force. For the hundredth time he went over the system of lines and levels by which he and David planned to tunnel their way to the coveted prize, indicating to himself the various points from which they proposed to start their work, and noting and comparing the obstacles they would encounter by each route.

Thus occupied, Raoul slowly circled the lake, following the precarious path that still remained along the edge

of the old high-water mark—the path upon which had marched the gaily vested Chibcha devotees in the pomp of their semi-annual festival, when the dancing waves radiating from the heavily laden rafts of the Gilded Man and his court, washed over their sandalled feet, and all was sunshine and joyous laughter, glitter of gold and emerald offerings ready poised to be hurled, with shouts of triumph, to the insatiable God in his crystalline caverns below.

Scenes from the old legend flashed across the prosaic details of Raoul's mining schemes, as he stood in the shadow of the majestic hill that lifted its huge shoulders behind him. Not a ripple scarred the surface of the sombre waters. The ancient God, it would seem, waiting in vain the tribute that once was his, had grown angry and made of his Sacred Lake a shrunken circle of dark and sinister meaning.

Into its silent depths, fascinated by the desolation surrounding him, Raoul gazed intently. He would revive the old ceremony. He would bring an offering to this hidden God—an offering bearing a menace, a demand for the treasure that he felt already in his grasp. He seized a stone from the many that were strewn at his feet. It was smooth, worn by the streams through which it had chafed its way hither; he paused as he weighed it thoughtfully in his outstretched hand. Then he threw it high in air, over the center of the pool. The sound of the falling missile plunging through the waters echoed sullenly along the towering walls of granite. The weird effect delighted him, and again and again he cast stones into the water, dislodging some of the more unwieldy rocks from their resting-places and watching them bound



and ricochet, with a thunderous noise, down the precipice after the others.

In the midst of this fantastic play he was arrested by the cry of a human voice. High, clear and sibilant it came; a word of command, as it seemed, out of the empty space above:

“Silence!”

He thought it might be the rustle of the wind that had just sprung up and was stirring the gnarled branches of the trees fringing the brow of the hill upon whose precipitous slope he was standing. Carefully he scanned the rocky pinnacles rising on either side of him. If it was not the wind, the invisible being whose voice he had heard might be hidden in one of the many clefts that furrowed the face of the hill behind him.

Again he heard the command. Silvery, unmistakably human; the peremptory voice came from some one near at hand, a few hundred yards, it might be, from where he stood:

“Silence!”

The tall, slim figure of a woman, clad in flowing white robe, with dazzling arm stretched downward, flashed in sharp outline against the dark hillside. She stood just above him, on a projecting shelf of rock. Her eyes, calm and stern, were not turned toward Raoul, but fixed intently on the lake, as if beholding—or expecting to behold—something there that was hidden from all others.

Involuntarily Raoul bent his head to this singular apparition, scarcely knowing whether it was a creature of his imagination, conjured out of the strange fancies awakened by the lonely scene, or a real woman, statuesque, beautiful.



Why was she here? Whence had she come? How address her? Vague questions crowded upon him, giving place finally to the conviction that he was an intruder and had unwittingly offended one whose rights here were supreme. And then he yielded to a feeling of shame at being caught in senseless boy's play.

"Pardon, *Senorita*," he murmured lamely.

"Ah," she sighed, a trace of irony in her voice; "it is I, a stranger here, who must ask pardon for daring to interrupt you."

"Again—pardon," he said, moved by the seriousness, the bitterness in her tone. "Surely, you are not a stranger to Guatavita, to Bogota?" he added, not concealing his astonishment.

"My home is far from here," she said simply. "Four days ago I left it for the first time to go to Bogota."

"And you visit the Sacred Lake on your way to the city!"

"My fathers sacrificed here," she said proudly. "I am an Indian, the daughter of those who once poured their treasure into the lake which you have defiled with stones."

"*Sajipona!*" called a harsh guttural voice from the trail that followed the cutting made by the Spaniards in the mountain's side.

"*Si, padre mio,*" she answered, slowly descending to the path upon which Raoul was standing.

In the gathering darkness Raoul saw, just emerging from the cleft in the rocks, the huge figure of a man, dressed, as all travelers are in the mountains, in wide sombrero, capacious ruana, great hair-covered leggings reaching to the waist, his spurred heels clattering on the

stones as he walked towards them. Two mules followed closely, the bridle of the foremost held in his hand; behind these came a burro, loaded with mountainous baggage which swayed from side to side as the patient little animal picked his way along the treacherous path.

"Good evening, *senor*," said the man suavely, as if Raoul were some old acquaintance whom he expected to meet. "It grows dark quickly. Moreover, it is far to the city and the beasts are tired. We stop for the night at La Granja. And you, *Senor*?"

"My horse is fresh, I will ride to Bogota."

"A stranger?" queried the man.

"An American."

"Ah!" Then, as if to atone for his surprise: "Bueno, in Bogota my house is yours."

Only the sure-footed mules of the Andes could have threaded this handsbreadth of a path in safety, and only a horsewoman of the lithe grace and dexterity of this daughter of the mountains could have swung herself with such slight assistance into the high, clumsy saddle as did this girl addressed as Sajipona.

"Watch your burro, *Senor*," warned Raoul, viewing with some anxiety that much encumbered animal wavering disconsolately on the brink of the precipice. "He will slip into the lake."

"Eh, *Senor*!" grunted the man, vaulting heavily to the back of his mule, at the same time spurring and then checking him with the reins. "He knows his business, the *canaille*! Besides," he added, chuckling to himself, "we carry no treasure for Guatavita. Since the days of Sajipa, men pay no tribute here—they look for it instead."

"That is true," murmured Raoul. Then, addressing the departing travelers: "May you have a pleasant ride, Senorita! And you, Senor; I may see you in Bogota?"

"In the Calle de Las Flores, Senor," called the other briskly. "Ask for Rafael Segurra; always—remember!—at your service."

Sajipa—Sajipona! The two names persisted in Raoul's thoughts as he rode home that evening. Over and over again he passed in review the details of his strange encounter with this mysterious girl who, in spite of the exquisite fairness of her complexion, called herself an Indian and claimed these old worshipers of the Lake God for her ancestors. Who was she? Could it be that his search for the descendant of that almost mythical line of monarchs had been so unexpectedly, completely rewarded? He could hardly wait for the morning to make the inquiries that he planned.

"Ah, yes," he was assured; "this Rafael Segurra is quite a man in his way—a 'politico,' strong with the government. He lives far from here—on a hacienda—no one knows where. And his daughter—he brings her to Bogota? That is strange! The beautiful Sajipona! Who knows if she really is Don Rafael's daughter! There is a mystery, a tradition about her. Yes, some say that she has in her veins the blood of that poor old zipa that the Spaniards roasted alive because he wouldn't tell where he had hidden his treasure. Still, how can that be if Don Rafael is her father? Ah, no one can be sure, Senor—their home is so far away. But—she is very beautiful. And there are many, many lovers—so they say."

The information, picked up from various sources, strengthened Raoul's first impression, and from that time, he became a constant visitor in the little house on the Calle de Las Flores.

## VIII

### A RIVER INTERLUDE

ON the deck of the wheezy, palpitating river steamer, "Barcelona," toiling slowly up the turbid waters of the Magdalena, sat the usual throng of passengers who are compelled to sacrifice two weeks of their lives every time they travel from the seacoast to Colombia's mountain capital. Fortunate such travelers count themselves if their lumbering, flat-bottomed craft, its huge stern wheel lifted high above the down-rushing eddies and whirlpools, escapes the treacherous mudbanks which form and dissolve in this ever-shifting, shallow current, and which not infrequently elude the vigilance of the navigator.

On this particular voyage, however, it is pleasant to record that the "Barcelona," in spite of various temptations to the contrary, had behaved in a most decorous manner, diplomatically avoiding the aforesaid mudbanks, submerged tree trunks and the like and giving promise of an early arrival at her destination in the Upper Magdalena.

In any part of the world except Colombia the progress of this steamer up the river on this occasion would have been followed with the liveliest interest from one end of the country to the other. News bulletins would have

chronicled every detail of her voyage; there would have been editorial speculation as to the possible delays she might encounter; predictions of the outcome of her snail-paced journey and, finally, statements—bogus or otherwise—would have come every now and then from the important personage who headed the list of the “Barcelona’s” passengers. For there was an unhappily important personage on board—a personage who, much to his own amazement, had helped in the making of history, and who was now on his way to report to the President of the Republic the details of what he had done.

Some men, according to one familiar with the accidents common to humanity, have greatness thrust upon them. General Herran was neither born great, nor had he, of his own free will, achieved greatness. But it had been thrust upon him. Without thought or act of his own he awoke one morning to find himself famous. It was an unenviable kind of fame, won in an opera-bouffe sort of way, and might, in some countries, have cost the general his head. But in Colombia there was, happily, no danger of this. Having lost his head once why should he lose it a second time, and just because he had fallen a victim to the wiles of the Panamanians?

Here is the brief but important chapter of history in which General Herran played a leading part. In the performance of his duty to quell any and every uprising which might occur on the Colombian coast he had gone with his army to the Isthmus, where, he had been told, something like a revolution was in progress. At Colon he had been courteously met on shipboard by representatives of this revolution. On their friendly invitation, and without disembarking his troops, he and his staff of



officers had then been escorted politely across the Isthmus to Panama where, much to their astonishment, they were promptly lodged in jail—a climax which any one but this unsuspecting general might have foreseen. During his absence his troops were sent back by the revolutionists to Colombia—and thus, without the firing of a shot, the Republic of Panama achieved its independence.

On board the "Barcelona," freed from the problem of keeping the Isthmians within the Colombian Union, General Herran gave no evidence of any disastrous effect on his own fortunes following his memorable experience of Panama diplomacy. The center of a convivial group of admiring friends, flanked by an inexhaustible supply of "La Cosa Sabrosa,"—the suggestive title given by one enthusiast to the native rum which accompanied them in an endless array of demijohns—this excellent leader of armies appeared to be making a triumphal progress homeward, rather than a decidedly ignominious retreat. His large mirthful brown eyes, peering out of a boyish face fringed by a heavy black beard, were undimmed by regrets and gave no token of the wily, self-seeking politician their possessor was said, by his enemies, to be. "El General," as he was usually called, was, in fact, the best of good fellows; one who, we can well imagine, might easily forget so paltry an adjunct as his troops, lured by the promise of a lively hour or so in a gay city with congenial companions. "Bobo" his detractors might call him, or "tonto"—but never "pendejo" nor "traidor."

With General Herran on board the "Barcelona," although not exactly of his party, and certainly not in the least of the military persuasion, was a round-paunched, bullet-headed little man who, arrayed in the

flimsiest of apparel, a wide-flapping Panama sombrero coming down to his ears, paced restlessly about the deck, fanning himself vigorously with a huge palm-leaf fan. Although of pure Spanish lineage, there was nothing of the traditional polish of his race in this explosive person's manner or speech. He had rolled about—one can hardly describe his mode of travel by another phrase—among many people and had recently settled down in a delightfully fever-ridden section of Colombia to practice medicine. "Doctor Quinine" he was called—behind his back—and it is said that he had simplified the methods of his profession by administering, on all occasions and for all diseases, the one simple, famous drug, discovered centuries ago by his ancestors in his native Peru. Quinine and a few drastic purgatives summed up his medical creed. If these remedies failed to cure—and they sometimes did fail—why, the unfortunate victim was simply a "canaille," and had, through his own stupidity, or malice, defeated the otherwise infallible result of the doctor's treatment.

The quininizing of the human race, however, was not the mission upon which Dr. Manuel Valiente Miranda had at present embarked. He had recently made a journey to the United States, whither he had gone to take out a patent on some marvelous "pildoras de quinina" of his own concoction. Having succeeded in the main object of his trip, and having failed incidentally to sell a single box of these same patented "pildoras" to any one of the benighted thousands whose faith was pinned to the ordinary medical practitioner, he had resolved to return to his old occupation of dosing with quinine the faithful on the Colombian coast. On his

homeward journey, however, he met a party of Americans who induced him to abandon for a time his original project and to join them in a trip to Bogota. As he was a man of independent means, a political exile from his native land, with no family ties whatsoever, there was nothing to hinder this sudden change in his plans. Hence his presence on the "Barcelona," where he had assumed guardianship over his American friends—whom he abused on occasion, as was his wont with those he liked—and where he engaged in sarcastic tilts with his old ally "El General."

In the political upheaval caused by the secession of Panama Doctor Miranda took especial delight; nor did he hesitate to upbraid those in authority for what he called their lack of gumption in the present situation. He predicted, moreover, the coming supremacy of "los Yankees" in South America. In all of this Doctor Miranda was good naturedly tolerated by his Colombian friends, who suffered his sarcasm much as they did his quinine, ignoring the bitterness out of regard for the curative virtue behind it.

Harold and Una Leighton, David Meudon, Andrew Parmelee and Mrs. Quayle were the Americans to whom Doctor Miranda had attached himself on this pilgrimage to Bogota. It was an oddly assorted party. That the persons composing it should be voyaging together up the Magdalena, with an eccentric Peruvian physician as a sort of cicerone, and in friendly intimacy with a group of discredited army officers accused of a traitorous abandonment of the national cause, formed one of those curious situations not unusual in South American travel.

The reader has already learned of the decision reached

by Harold Leighton and David to visit Bogota in order to solve there the mystery of the three months following the dynamite explosion in the Guatavita tunnel. As her uncle had foreseen, Una insisted on going with them, and had brought Mrs. Quayle along besides. There was no particular reason why that estimable lady should accompany them. She had rarely ventured beyond the borders of her native Connecticut, and could certainly be of no possible use on so long and difficult a journey as this. But something had to be done with her. She was afraid to be left alone at Stoneleigh, and as she was anxious about Una it seemed best on the whole to take her along. She proved an inoffensive traveler and gave amusement to more than one tourist by her extraordinary costumes, especially the massive, old-fashioned jewelry, with which her hands and neck were covered and from which she refused ever to be parted.

The trip was a hard one for Leighton, who was wedded to his quiet methodical life in Rysdale, and who had no mind for the distractions and annoyances of foreign travel. He was spurred to activity, however, by his interest in the psychological puzzle presented by David, added to which was a growing curiosity regarding the mysterious Indian lake and its reputed treasure. An ordinary mining scheme, no matter how promising, would not have moved the philosophic master of Stoneleigh. But here was something out of which might come a fine scientific discovery revealing the secrets of a bygone civilization. Hence, he had not regretted his resolution to make this quixotic pilgrimage and, as he had latterly fallen into a sort of dependence on Andrew Parmelee for much of the detail work connected with his scientific

studies, he had arranged with the village authorities for the schoolmaster to accompany him to Colombia.

Andrew was not a little alarmed at the intimate daily association with Una, the object of his adoration, which such a journey involved. But the fancied terrors of the situation had their compensations. It might even happen that in the primitive region to which they were going he could be of vital service to this stony-hearted fair one—a possibility that filled him with dreams of deadly peril by land and sea in which he acted the part of rescuer to helpless innocence. So, this modern knight errant was miraculously strengthened to ward off the attacks of his Aunt Hepzibah, and departed on his mission fired with all the zeal of the hero of La Mancha, his high resolve unclouded by the horrors that speedily came to him in the rotund nightmare known in the flesh as Doctor Miranda.

“Ah, this little Yankee,” repeatedly declared that restless follower of Aesculapius, regarding the bewildered Andrew with professional glee; “he must take my pills or he will die!”

Then, Andrew, helplessly declaring that he never felt better in his life, would be seized by the merciless doctor, his eyelids forced apart until the whites of the eyes were fully exposed to whoever cared to inspect them, while a triumphant announcement marked the success of the dismal exhibit: “See! it is all yellow! This leetle fellow have the malaria, the calentura. And he refuse to take my pills—the estupido!”

But if Andrew was disturbed by these alarming outbreaks of the doctor, his companions enjoyed to the full that mental and physical relaxation experienced by many



only in the tropics. An endless panorama of primeval forest, broken at intervals by clusters of wattled Indian huts, known as villages, with high-sounding names, to the Magdalena boatmen, gave to the long river journey the pleasant surprises of some half remembered dream. There was the charm of the familiar as well as the picturesque in the drowsy air, the swift oily flow of turbid waters, the flashing green, gold and scarlet of the riotous shore. Merely to feel, if only for a day, the changing moods of this tropical nature, more than repaid, one felt, all the hardships and weariness of primitive travel.

For Una and David all this formed a memorable interlude in their mutual experiences. Even the complex mission upon which the girl had entered was forgotten in the novelty of the world to which chance had brought her. The scenic splendor of the river exceeded anything she had imagined. She was fascinated by the wide sweep of water, the foliage, the glorious passion-flowers that embroidered, here and there, the thick mantle of green vines and swaying lianas that bound the treetops to the river beneath; by the flocks of parrots, glistening like living emeralds in the sun-bathed air, chattering their language of wild happiness as they flew from branch to branch on the silent shore. Never had she beheld such serene, graceful creatures as the swans—she took them for swans, although Leighton chuckled grimly when appealed to on the subject—great, long-necked birds, wheeling and soaring far above the steamer, clouds of shimmering white in a sea of purest sapphire. White, too, with head and neck a brilliant scarlet, was the stately King of the Vultures, surrounded by a fluttering throng of dusky followers, dining on a dead alligator.



"See, Senorita!" exclaimed Miranda, pointing to a bowerlike opening amid the bushes and trees on the shore. "Ah, he is one bad fellow, that canaille!"

"I see nothing. Oh, yes—another dead alligator!"

"Dead!" laughed the doctor. "He is just one trap. Soon he come together—so!—and catch his dinner."

It was a familiar scene on this river of the tropics: an alligator lying motionless on the shore, his yellow, mottled jaws open, waiting for his prey. In form and color he seemed a part of the dead branches and tangle of brushwood he had chosen for his resting place. Once recognized, however, and the malignant creature became a vivid symbol of the ruthless death with which he threatened whoever mistook his yawning mouth for a rift in a fallen tree-trunk.

"What a monster!" exclaimed David, roused from his daylong dreams.

"Estupido!" retorted Miranda. "He wait for his dinner—as you and I—that is all. The so cruel alligator, you know, is good mother for the young ones. She love them better than some womens."

"That hideous brute!"

"Si, Senor!" declared the doctor. "So soon that they hatch themselves, she carry the young ones in the mouth and teach them to hunt. She fight for them and die, if it be so."

Miranda's vague natural history was of the kind derived from wonder-loving natives. It blended well with the Magdalena's scenic marvels, the wild animal life, glimpses of which were caught at every hand, the dark-skinned natives in their rude dugouts—all that set this apart as a sort of primeval world far removed from any

hint of the modern. But the skepticism of the scientist was proof against idle tales.

"I am not sure that your theory of the alligator is correct, Senor Doctor," remarked Leighton dryly.

"Ah, carai!" spluttered Miranda, wheeling about, ever ready for the fray.

"What you say about the care of the female alligator for her young may be true enough," said the savant, ignoring the scowl with which he was regarded; "but that the brute over there in the bushes is holding his mouth open by the hour in that ridiculous fashion, hoping that something may walk into it, is unreasonable."

"Then, what for she do it?" demanded the doctor severely.

"I can't tell you that," admitted Leighton, adding, with a touch of humor, "perhaps he finds it comfortable on a hot day like this to get as much air as he can. Of course, I have no doubt that he would close his mouth quickly enough if any creature walked into it."

"I agree with Mr. Leighton," ventured the schoolmaster.

"Ah!" sniffed the doctor scornfully. "And you, Senorita?"

"Why," said Una doubtfully, enjoying the doctor's wrath, "he certainly does look hungry, doesn't he? I wouldn't trust him—although he seems to be asleep."

"And you, Senor?" glaring at David.

"Oh, I'm not a naturalist," he laughed. "But, he looks like a pretty good sort of trap, just the same."

"Bueno, General, what sayest thou?" asked the doc-

tor somewhat mollified. "What is that cayman doing there under the trees?"

General Herran gazed meditatively at the monster who was unconsciously causing this pother in natural history, and his eyes had a reminiscent twinkle as he answered the question:

"That cayman with his mouth open is like the Yankee waiting for Colombia to walk in."

"And you walked in!" shouted Miranda delightedly.

"Well, I walked out again," said the other complacently.

"But you left Panama inside the mouth!"

"Have your joke, Senor Doctor," said Herran, not relishing the broad allusion to his discomfiture. "But perhaps your American friends here will find a cayman in the bushes. Why do they go to Bogota just now?"

"They are friends to you. With you it is all right."

"I hear that the peons are rising against the Yankees."

"The canaille! They can do nothing."

"Besides," pursued the general, "excellent and harmless as this learned Senor and his family are, I can hardly appear, under all the circumstances, as protector and champion of a party of Americans."

General Herran spoke in so rapid an undertone that only one to whom Spanish is the native tongue could have followed him. But Leighton's keen intelligence, although he was not well versed in Spanish idioms, was quick to catch at least an inkling of what was passing between his two companions.

"There is danger for Americans traveling in the interior?" he asked.

"I not say so," replied the doctor stoutly.

Herran tugged at the tangles of his bushy beard. "I hear that some peons have left Bogota to fight the Yankees on the coast," he said. "But—it is nothing."

"Well, what shall we do?"

The general shrugged his shoulders. Miranda fanned himself more vigorously than ever.

"It is not important, Senor," he said impatiently. "These people are good peoples; they are not caymans."

"Perhaps it is better to wait before you go to Bogota," persisted Herran.

"Wait in the river?" angrily demanded the doctor.

"I don't believe there is any danger. I love this country," said Una. "Let's go to Bogota, Uncle Harold."

"Heavens, child!" exclaimed Mrs. Quayle tremulously, the heavy gold rings that adorned her fingers clicking together in dismay. "With all these savage, half-dressed natives about, threatening the lives of innocent Americans—and poor Mr. Parmelee down with this terrible fever——"

"I am not," feebly protested Andrew.

"Yes, that is so!" exclaimed the doctor, a joyous grin wrinkling his face. "The vieja (old lady) speak right. We stay at Honda and give this little fellow my pills."

"There is sense in your plan," declared Leighton. "If we can be comfortable—and safe—at Honda, we will stay until we know what is happening away from the river, and until Mr. Parmelee regains his health under your treatment."

"My dear Mr. Leighton, I assure you,——" began the schoolmaster piteously.

"Don't be an estolidito!" interrupted Miranda brusk-

ly. "Soon you will be all right with my pills. This little vieja, she know—she is very wise."

Mrs. Quayle's gray ringlets bobbed deprecatingly at this generous tribute to a hitherto unsuspected sagacity on the part of their modest owner, while Andrew looked more uncomfortable and woebegone than ever.

"Doctor, you are sure that Mr. Parmelee has this miserable fever?" inquired Una anxiously.

"Senorita," declared the little man, drawing himself up impressively, "I never mistake. I have been doctor when thousand and thousand die of the calentura——"

"Good heavens! Poor, dear Mr. Parmelee!" murmured Mrs. Quayle.

"And I know," continued Miranda, ignoring the interruption. "I say he have the calentura, the malaria. You will see in the eyes—I will show to you."

Andrew, prepared for what was coming, eluded his medical tormentor, seeking safety behind the chair of the portly Leighton.

"Caramba! que estúpido!" growled the doctor, balked of his prey. "Bueno," he added, fanning himself resignedly, "we shall see. In Honda you take my pills. Soon we will be there. And then it is good that everyone take my pills. I am friend to you. I will take the care, I charge nothing for the family."

"I'll not stay in Honda," said David, breaking the silence following this wholesale offer of assistance. "I must get to Bogota as quickly as possible. Once there I can let you know if it's safe to travel into the interior."

"A good idea," assented Leighton.

"If it's dangerous for us, it's dangerous for you," objected Una.



"Oh, I'll take a burro loaded with the doctor's pills along with me," said David. "I know the country. I have friends in Bogota; there is no danger. And I leave you in good hands."

"So, that is settle," remarked Miranda complacently. "Very good! I take care to your families. But—you will beware, my young fellow."

"I tell you I'll have a burro load of your pills, doctor!"

"That is good. You are not estúpido, like this leetle fellow with the malaria! Remember, these people are no friend just now to the Yankee."

"Everyone knows me here; I have no enemies," was the confident reply.

Honda, the picturesque little river-port whence the traveler from the coast sets out on muleback for his three days' journey up the mountains to Bogota, was reached on the following day, after a twenty-five mile trip by rail from La Dorada, the terminus of the Magdalena steamers. Charming as Honda is architecturally, its quaint red-tiled houses nestling against a background of radiantly green foothills over which the winding trails leading to the far distant capital are scarcely ever without their ascending or descending trains of jostling mules and burros, the place has something of a bad name among foreigners for its fevers. Whether or not its reputation in this respect is deserved would be hard to say. For the traveler, certainly, who has been confined for ten days to the rude quarters provided by a river steamer, the little town comes as a welcome respite in a long if not uninteresting journey. Here, for the first time, he tastes the freedom and glamour of the Andes;

and in the movement and bustle incident to setting out on the arduous pull over the primitive passes that thread their way across the mountains, there is the stimulus that comes with the promise of adventure and discovery. Honda, with its radiant sunshine, its tilted streets, its cool white buildings and low rambling hostelries hidden under a veil of flashing greenery, its sparkling little mountain stream tumbling beneath a venerable bridge that savors of the days of Spanish conquest and romance, is the link of emerald between the mighty river of the tropics and the vast highlands that stretch upward to the region of perpetual snow. As an emerald it lives ever after in the traveler's memory.

In this village—it is hardly more than that—oriental in its sensuous beauty, American of a century or two ago in character and outward aspect, the “Barcelona’s” passengers were content to stay for a time. Una’s delight in the picturesque little settlement was marred by the impending separation from David. It was not merely his absence that caused her unhappiness; she worried over the dangers that she believed awaited him in Bogota. Her anxiety was increased by the rumor, reaching the travelers on their arrival at La Dorado, that war had been declared between the United States and Colombia. There was no truth in this rumor; it was without official confirmation, and ridiculed alike by Doctor Miranda, David and Leighton. But it was credited by most of the natives, whose belief was stoutly upheld by the principal American resident of Honda, an amiable patriarch who had once acted as his government’s representative and was known throughout the republic. True or false,

the rumor did not add to the comfort of the travelers, and intensified Una's desire to keep David with the rest of the party until they could all set out together for Bogota.

## IX

### ON INDIAN TRAILS

**D**OCTOR MIRANDA was right about Andrew. By the time he had finished moving his party and their luggage from the stifling railroad shed to the cool courtyard of Honda's principal inn, the schoolmaster had been beaten in his last feeble fight for liberty and had become the victim to an unlimited amount of quininizing. No need now to force his eyelids apart to reveal the telltale yellow within. Even a tyro in such matters could see from his jaundiced appearance, his quick breathing, his general inertia, that he was in the first stages of an attack of fever. This being beyond dispute, the little doctor dropped his fighting humor for one of bustling activity, beneath which there lurked a rough sort of tenderness for his unhappy patient. A bed, a pitcher of "lemon squash," and a box of the famous "pildoras," were quickly provided by dint of much storming at the indolent hotel servants and angry prodding of the astonished proprietor. When all his arrangements were perfected, Andrew completely in his power and stuffed as full as might be with quinine, the triumphant Miranda rejoined his friends, his rubicund features beaming with satisfaction.

"No! No! my lady," he answered Una's anxious inquiries, "there is no danger. That leetle fellow has my

pills and plenty of squash. He cannot die. Soon he will be well. You will see. I am doctor to him."

His assurances had their effect, although they failed to convince the despondent Mrs. Quayle, who shook her head dolefully, rocking herself back and forth in her chair and bewailing the sad fate that was awaiting "poor dear Mr. Parmelee in this desolate country." At all of which the irascible doctor scowled ominously, taking her complaint as a reflection on his medical skill. Leighton, however, faced the situation in a matter of fact way, while David set about the necessary preparations for his journey to Bogota. An excellent opportunity offered that very day to join General Herran's party in the trip over the mountains.

A train of twenty mules and burros was needed for the expedition, and to procure these and load them with the necessary baggage, called for no small amount of work and skillful management. The stone courtyard of the inn rang with the shouts of burro drivers, the quarrels of peons intent on selling their wares to travelers at the best prices, and the threats and commands of General Herran and his officers. Above this din, apparently necessary on such occasions, one could hear the strident voice of Doctor Miranda, browbeating some luckless vendor of merchandise, or ridiculing the exertions of those who would bestow a maximum of baggage on a minimum of burro. In spite of the confusion, however, everything moved along in as orderly and expeditious a manner as is possible with these ancient methods of travel. By midday the last load was adjusted, the twenty animals forming the cavalcade stood strapped and ready for the start.



Hot, stifling was the air in the courtyard; the cobbled pavement of the street outside fairly baked beneath the relentless sun. Most of the shops and tiendas were closed for the noon siesta, and only a few listless stragglers ventured beyond the cool white portals of the houses. It was not a happy hour in which to commence a difficult journey; but General Herran, marvelously energetic for once, had planned to cover a certain distance before nightfall. So, without more ado, the "bestias" were marshaled, single file, and driven out, with much shouting and laying on of goads, into the street, where they stood patiently waiting for the eight travelers whom they were to carry to Bogota.

"We are off at last!" announced David, entering the salon where Leighton, Una, Mrs. Quayle and Miranda awaited the caravan's departure. "In less than a week you'll hear from me. By that time, I hope, you'll be ready for Bogota."

"I can never go on one of those vicious animals," sighed Mrs. Quayle, her bejeweled fingers nervously clutching the arms of the chair.

"Vicious!" exclaimed David. "They are harmless as kittens."

As if in denial of the comparison, one of the burros standing near the doorway stiffened out his forefeet and brayed with all the vehemence of which burro lungs are capable. He was followed by his comrades in misery—a full chorus of brays from which no discordant note was missing. Had it been the traditional bellowing of a herd of bulls—it was noisy enough for that—the timid lady could not have been more alarmed, nor the doctor more delighted.

"Bravo!" he shouted. "They want you, my Senora. They wait for you."

"Good-bye!" said David, clasping Una's hand.

"Good-bye!" she said, almost inaudibly.

"Doctor, look out for them," he called to Miranda.

"Be sure! Be sure!" was the response, a glint of sympathy lighting his eyes. "Have a care to you. I have that leetle fellow in bed. He is full of lemona squash and my pills. Soon his calentura is kill."

"Well, don't kill him too!"

"Ah, canaille!"

The members of General Herran's party had already mounted and were slowly disappearing down the bend of the street, pack-mules and burros in the lead. The general himself, on a pinched-up, piebald horse that, like Hamlet's cloud, bore a comical resemblance to a camel, lingered behind for his guest. David's bay, lacking in zoological vagaries, pranced spiritedly to begone as soon as it felt its rider in the saddle.

"That is one good animal," commented Miranda.

"The other needs your pills," remarked Leighton solemnly.

With a laugh and a hearty "adios!" the two horsemen saluted the group in the doorway and galloped off after their companions. Una watched, motionless, long after David was out of sight. She had done her best to prevent his going, but all her efforts had been useless. Nor could she explain, even to herself, why it was that she so dreaded his leaving their party to travel alone with Herran. There was nothing logical in the feeling, of course, and she had to confess that for once she was influenced by an utterly unreasonable fear, a sort of superstition.

The journey from Honda to Bogota is a scramble over precipitous trails worn into the living rock by centuries of travel, through wastes of traffic-beaten mire, along glades of dew-soaked herbage that gleam refreshingly under cloudless skies in a wilderness of impenetrable forest. No other city of like size and importance has so rude and picturesque an approach, nor are there many that keep their commerce along ways and by methods so unmodern. The stranger, ignorant of the simplicities of South American life, whether in town or country, is bewildered by the oddities and hardships in a trip of this kind. But David had traveled more than once over the Bogota trail, and for him it had lost its novelty, especially as his sole aim on the present occasion was to reach his destination as quickly as possible. Herran had a similar feeling; hence, as the day was not unpleasantly warm, once they had passed beyond the lowlands of Honda both men urged their horses on to top speed. In a short time they had left the rest of the party far behind them, and broke into a race over the rough mountain trail. Tiring of this, they dropped back to a more sober gait, letting their horses choose their own way for a time.

"I telegraphed from Honda that we were coming," said Herran in Spanish. "They are looking for us now in Bogota."

"Did you say that I was with you?" asked David.

"Surely. As an officer it is my duty to give complete information," was the somewhat pompous reply. "I gave the names of all who are in your party and told why they stayed in Honda."

"Why so much detail about us? My friends and I are

not connected with the military movements of the country."

"That may be true, *Senor*. But you travel with me and—I am ignorant of your business, you know."

"We travel partly for pleasure, partly—I am interested in a Guatavita mining venture."

"So! Will they know that when they see your name in the Bogota papers?"

"My friend that I am going to visit will know, of course. I wrote to him that I was coming. Why do you ask?"

"Ah! Just now, it may be, my countrymen will not like American mining ventures—or Americans."

"Then, Americans are in danger?"

"How can I say, *Senor*?" he answered with a shrug. "I have lost Panama, they say. I, too, have enemies. Perhaps I am in danger. But you have a friend in Bogota? He is——?"

"An American; Raoul Arthur."

"I have heard of him."

"He is well liked here."

"That is good," commented Herran drily.

For the first time since he had been in Colombia David felt uneasy as to the possible outcome of his trip. His friends, in reach of the river steamers, could leave the country at the first sign of real danger. But every mile placed between himself and the Magdalena lessened his chances for escape—and that he might need to get out of Colombia in a hurry was evident from Herran's attitude, his reserve, his ambiguous answers to David's questions. All this was not exactly through a lack of friendliness on the general's part. David knew Herran

fairly well, and did not doubt his loyalty. He also knew that he was under suspicion on account of the Panama affair, and for this reason would have to be extremely wary in extending protection to an American seeking to enrich himself in Colombia. Politically, the man who lost Panama could not afford to let his name be further compromised.

General Herran, however, was not one to keep up an attitude of restraint for long. The air was bracing, the mountain trail was in excellent condition, the horses were fresh and responded readily to whip and bridle. Under these favoring influences the two travelers soon became sociable enough, and even joked over some of the sinister circumstances attending their journey.

"We are a long way from Panama, Senor—and Miranda's pills!" exclaimed Herran.

"Heaven help the schoolmaster!" laughed David.

"Ah, poor fellow! To be at the doctor's mercy! But he is not a bad doctor. Only nine out of every ten of his victims die, they say. Perhaps this schoolmaster—— Have you your pistol, Senor?" he broke off suddenly.

"My pistol, General?"

"For a salute to Panama and our friends," explained the other. "You do not know the custom of the road to Bogota in times of revolution—that is, at all times. And you have no pistol," he added with a sigh. "But this will do for both of us."

Reining in his horse at a shaded bend in the trail, General Herran, unconsciously following the Fat Knight's memorable exploit on Shrewsbury Battlefield, took from his hip pocket a huge case bottle and handed it to David.



"Fire the first shot, my friend, and I will come after with a long one for your Guatavita mine."

In the act of carrying out this pleasant suggestion, the attention of David and Herran was suddenly caught by a babel of voices—shouts of command, the tramp of many feet—coming from the Bogota end of the trail. Interruptions of this kind are more serious than they may seem to those unfamiliar with Colombian mountain travel. So rough and narrow is the road to Bogota, with sometimes a precipice on one hand and a sheer wall of rock on the other, that the problem of two parties passing each other is not always an easy one. Although this is the chief thoroughfare between the national capital and the Magdalena, it remains quite as primitive and unadapted to modern needs as in the days of the Indians. To widen and pave it proved more of a task in road-building than the Spanish conquerors cared to undertake; and their successors in the government of the country have, until now, attempted little in the way of improvement. Thus, travelers from the lowlands over this Indian trail frequently have to fight for a passage through a descending rabble of men and burros, or else allow themselves to be crowded off into a tangle of underbrush on one side or thrown down a steep cliff on the other.

As it happened, the spot chosen by General Herran and David for their friendly salute was a particularly awkward one in an encounter with a lot of travelers coming from the opposite direction. In front of them the trail rose abruptly in a long zigzag of rocks and gullies, down which the caravan from Bogota, the noise of whose approach grew rapidly more distinct, was bound to descend

upon them. Their only chance to escape was either through a morass, covered with a dense forest growth, or else up a hazardous mountain side, strewn with boulders and loose stones. Of course, they might retrace their steps until they found a more open space; but this seemed too much like retreating from an enemy and did not recommend itself to either of the horsemen.

"It sounds like a regiment of soldiers," said David, taking another long draught from the Falstaffian "pistol" and returning it to Herran.

"Perhaps," replied the General, indifferent to outside matters until he had finished his part of the prescribed ceremony. "And here we are," he added, with a sigh of contentment, "saluting Panama and an American company, with an army of volunteers, bent on licking the Yankees, coming down upon us."

"Are you sure?"

"Caramba! In Honda they said these volunteers started from Bogota three days ago. They are due here now."

"We must meet them," said David, upon whom the General's "pistol" had not failed to score.

"Wait a moment! As Miranda would say, these peons are canaille and—there is no room for a meeting."

Both men laughed. Nevertheless, in spite of the humor of the situation, it had more than the usual peril incident to travel on the Bogota trail to be comfortable.

"Two men against a regiment!" chuckled Herran.

"But they are not after us," argued David.

"They are after the Yankees—and you are a Yankee. Well, Senor, what shall we do?"

"You are in command, Senor General."

"Caramba! Then, let us march! We can't jump down those rocks, the swamp is even worse—and we won't retreat before a lot of peons. Forward, Señor! We can at least use pistols if we need to!"

With which comforting assurance Herran handed one of his case bottles to David. This the latter retained, first joining his comrade in a final "salute," declaring all the while that this kind of exercise had been unknown to him for years—a statement received by General Herran with the skepticism it deserved. The two horses were then brought into line and, with touch of whip and spur, commenced a scramble up the trail, at the top of which the front ranks of the peons were just visible.

As Herran had predicted, the travelers with whom they had to contest the right of way belonged to one of the volunteer regiments of Bogota peons bound for the Isthmus. At their head rode Pedro, "El Rey," more dilapidated as to costume but more joyous of mood than on that memorable morning when he led his forces down the Calle de Las Montanas to be reviewed by the President of the Republic. He had parted with his blacking box and in place of it, hanging from his neck, was a rusty old sword that clanked dismally on the scarred and battered ribs of the solemn burro upon which he was mounted. Burros, as a rule, are patient animals, taking whatever comes, whether insult, ridicule, or cajolery, with unruffled temper, and this particular specimen of the long-suffering race evinced supreme indifference to the military honors that sat so weightily upon him. Pedro, however, was not unmindful of the distinctions he had won. Immediately behind him, borne by two of his trustiest lieutenants, floated the flag of the republic, its

red and yellow folds somewhat faded and dusty from the three days' march, and flapping now in anything but defiant fashion. But it formed a good background to the enthusiasm of leadership that marked the bearing and illuminated the grimy features of Bogota's ex-bootblack and, doubtless, helped keep up the courage and patriotism of his followers. The latter marched, for the most part, on foot and in such straggling lines as best suited them. When it first set out from Bogota the regiment had kept some sort of military order, but this had long since been abandoned, and the host of men and boys, some thousand in number, jostled each other and choked up the narrow trail in glorious confusion.

Having reached the top of the hill overlooking the sheltered ledge chosen by David and Herran for their impromptu celebration, the volunteers kept right on. Led by Pedro and his two banner-bearers, they plunged down the steep, winding trail, crowding upon each other, shouting and laughing, filling the narrow space with most unmilitary disorder. In the meantime the two horsemen tried their best to reach a point as near as possible to the top of the trail before the volunteers began the descent. In this they failed, and the inevitable collision with the front ranks of the peons took place half way up the hillside. Here they met Pedro and his immediate followers, behind whom pressed, with increasing energy, the whole rabble of peons. But the dejected burro, whose duty it was to carry the leader of these ragged cohorts to victory, refused to be hurried by those behind him. The more he was urged the greater was his deliberation in picking his way among the treacherous stones covering the trail. Thumps and blows failed to arouse his enthu-

siasm, and with every fresh difficulty presented by rock or sudden dip in the pathway, he stopped to take a careful survey of the surrounding obstacles before proceeding with his journey. Memories of past disaster had taught him the value of caution that a younger, less experienced burro might have failed to observe. But the horses of David and Herran, although ancient enough, were not afflicted with recollections of former mishaps, and so plunged into the ranks of the peons without regard for consequences.

"Hug the side of the road," cautioned Herran in a low voice. "I'll take the middle and try to distract the attention of these people from you."

"Salute, Senor!" cried Pedro, attempting as courteous a greeting as his burro would allow. "What news from Panama?"

Not to be outdone in courtesy, Herran pulled back his horse from the folds of the flag into which he was patriotically heading, and offered his "pistol" to "El Rey."

"Ah!" exclaimed Pedro, his eyes fairly snapping with astonishment; "it is General Herran! Bueno, Senor General, we go to bring Panama back to Colombia."

"That is well," replied the other, diplomatically ignoring the implied reproach; "with such brave men you will surely succeed, Senor Capitan."

"And the Yankees?" queried Pedro, smacking his lips after a long draught from the General's bottle.

"Doubtless you will find them in Panama."

The news that this was General Herran, the man whom Panama had made famous, spread like wildfire among the volunteers, who crowded together excitedly, bent on hearing the latest bulletin from the land they were pledged to



recapture. Shouts of amazement, indignation, derision echoed along the trail—expressions of hostility that might have appalled one less cool than Herran. But he pretended not to notice these demonstrations, and devoted himself to Pedro, who, he perceived, was moved by his flattery.

"It's a bad business, Senor Capitan," he assured him confidentially. "But the country is safe with such brave volunteers to defend it."

"And you, Senor General, you fight with us?"

"It will be an honor," graciously replied the hero of Panama. "But first I must see His Excellency, the President, in Bogota. I will tell him how you are hurrying to the rescue of the Isthmus."

"Where are your soldiers?"

"Some of them you will meet on the way to Honda."

"An officer was with you just now. Where is he?"

In the throng of volunteers surrounding them it was impossible to distinguish David, who had doubtless seized the opportunity created by the sudden recognition of Herran to force his way up the side of the trail as the General had suggested.

"Caramba!" exclaimed Herran. "He has gone on ahead. He knows the President awaits us and the despatches of great importance to the republic that we bring him. I must hurry. Pardon, Senor Capitan, if I am forced to leave you so quickly. Perhaps we meet soon again in Panama."

With a fine show of deference, Herran saluted the King of the Bootblacks, whose eyes sparkled proudly at this recognition of his rank from a brother officer, and who signified his appreciation of the tribute by a wave of the

hand to his followers and a command to them not to delay the General.

"Senores!" he shouted, "make way for the great Senor General! He comes for the Republic. After he has seen Don Jose, he will go with us to bring back Panama."

The order was given with all the flourish that had won renown for Pedro as a polisher of boots and was received by the volunteers with their wonted cheerfulness and enthusiasm. Unfortunately, the burro who had the honor of carrying "El Rey" was so unappreciative of his rider's eloquence that he allowed himself to be jostled into too close proximity with the bearers of the flag. He then became so hopelessly entangled in his country's colors that, uttering a dismal bray, he was tumbled headlong down the slippery hill, dragging the amazed and protesting Pedro with him.

Profiting by this accident, General Herran spurred his own horse through the ranks of the volunteers, gaining at last, after much energetic pushing and shoving, the top of the hill. Here he paused to look back, with an inward chuckle, at the excited throng of men and boys from whom he had escaped, and to pick up again his fellow traveler, David. But David was nowhere to be seen. Herran expected to find him on the level space at the top of the hill; that he was not there filled him with anxiety. Reasoning, however, that if the volunteers had attacked David he would have heard of it, and convinced that the American was not with the mob he had just left, he set spurs to his horse, expecting to find him further on. After all, he argued, it was natural that a Yankee, traveling alone, should put as great a distance as possible between himself and these volunteers. But,

whatever the explanation, David was not to be found. There were no cross trails from the main Bogota road into which he might have blundered, and his disappearance, therefore, became more of a puzzle as Herran traveled mile after mile, at the best speed of which his horse was capable, without trace of him.

In a way General Herran felt responsible for the safety of the man with whom he had been traveling, the more so that this man was a foreigner, belonging to a nation whose citizens were not welcome just then in Colombia. Had David been other than an American, Herran would have taken his disappearance, puzzling though it was, with the cheerful indifference peculiar to him. But the fact that he was an American, alone in a hostile country, appealed to a chivalrous strain in his nature, urging him to do the best he could for his rescue. Unfortunately, the solving of the simplest of problems was not in the General's line, and he painfully turned the matter over and over without result, one way or the other. David, he told himself, had forced his way through the ranks of the volunteers without attracting attention. He felt sure of this because he had watched his ascent of the trail for a good part of the way. Hence, he could not be with the volunteers now. Only a few of the latter were mounted, and these marched in the front ranks where they had been carefully noted by Herran. If David had remained in the rear ranks of the regiment, voluntarily or as a captive, his horse would have made him conspicuous. Of course, during the commotion following the accident to Pedro and his burro almost anything might have happened; David might have been captured, bound and gagged, his horse taken away and he himself hidden

by the peons who held him prisoner in the hope of future ransom. But this was all too bewildering, too complex for Herran seriously to consider. Instead, he convinced himself that David had escaped the volunteers, that he was no longer behind him on the trail, that he must therefore be in front, and that to find him there was only one thing to do—push forward as fast as possible.

Acting on this, General Herran rode without stopping until nightfall, reaching just after dusk—dusk comes swiftly enough in the tropics—one of the primitive little hostelries kept for the accommodation of travelers to and from Bogota. Here, as is usual in such places, there was a large number of guests intending to spend the night. This posada, or inn, was a one-storied, rambling affair consisting of three rooms and a verandah sheltered by the overhanging eaves of a thatched roof. All the rooms were filled with people, most of them lying on mats spread on the floor; the verandah was similarly occupied. In the dim light from smoky lanterns it was difficult to tell who these people were. Herran, confident that David was among them, appealed to the proprietor, a stolid looking peon, for information.

"You have a Yankee here, Senor?"

"No, Senor."

"A Yankee came to-day from Honda?"

"No, Senor."

"He was riding alone to Bogota?"

"No, Senor."

"A young man on a bay horse?"

"No, Senor."

"Is there a foreigner here?"

"No, Senor."

"A foreigner passed here to-day on a bay horse?"

"No, Senor."

"Caramba, hombre! Have you ever seen a foreigner here?"

"No—yes, Senor."

"To-day?"

"No, Senor."

Exasperated by what he considered the stupidity of the landlord, Herran addressed, in a loud voice, the various guests who were preparing to pass the night on such improvised beds as they could get for themselves.

"Senores, I am looking for a young man, a foreigner, a Yankee, who is riding to Bogota on a bay horse. He must be here. Have you seen him?"

There was a confused murmur. A number of the men sat up on their mats and repeated energetically the landlord's negative. Others grumblingly denounced all Yankees as robbers and disturbers of the country's peace. One young man, dressed in the uniform of an army officer, recognizing Herran's rank, politely offered to share his mat with him, suggesting, at the same time, that he could pursue his search to much better advantage in the morning. As further inquiries brought out nothing new, Herran accepted this officer's hospitality, wearily resigning himself to the conclusion that David had been mysteriously spirited away, and was about to be shot by a lot of insane peons, led on by the ridiculous Pedro. So it seemed to him as he sank into a nightmare-ridden sleep.

Morning failed to bring the expected solution of the General's difficulties. In the bedlam created by burros, horses, travelers—all trying to make their departure from



the inn at the same early hour, and all finding their plans delayed by some fault in harness, mislaying of baggage, or other inconvenience peculiar to a four-footed conveyance—there was no sign of the missing David. A number of native merchants on their way from Bogota to the coast, who had lodged at the inn during the night, recognized Herran, and although their greetings were cordial, the oldtime friendliness was tempered by the uncertainty with which the average Colombian viewed this unfortunate officer's part in the so-called Panama revolution. As news of his presence spread among the departing guests, General Herran felt the restraint as well as the disagreeable curiosity with which he was regarded. This made his search for David more difficult. Under the circumstances it was not easy to explain why he, of all men, was traveling with an American; hence, he was forced to speak with more reserve than he would have liked of the young man's disappearance.

As a result of the little that he learned, he was convinced that David had neither reached nor passed the inn on the way to Bogota. There remained two alternatives. Had his companion been carried along by the volunteers? Or, had he, by mistake, of course, taken a side trail from the main road and thus lost himself in the labyrinth of mountains and forests through which they were traveling? No one knew of such a side trail. As for the other possibility, there was nothing to do but await the coming of his own party of men and officers whom Herran and David had left shortly after their departure from Honda, and who must have met, in their turn, the volunteers somewhere on the road. In the

meantime, nothing could be gained from the landlord of the inn, whose intelligence was at an even lower ebb in the morning than on the preceding evening. This good-natured but fatuous boniface found it difficult to sustain a conversation on the most ordinary topics; and as a result of his intellectual labors with him, the sociable Herran was nearing the extremity of misery when his own party arrived, several hours after the last traveler had left the inn.

"Ah, yes, Senor General!" groaned Colonel Rodriguez, the bustling little officer in charge of the men during Herran's absence; "we met the volunteers. They wanted us to go with them to Panama. They waved their flag, they shouted, they made speeches, they cheered the fatherland, they cursed the Yankees, they said you would lead them to the Isthmus. Their little capitan, who rode on a burro and talked peon very much, said we belonged to them, and Colombia depended on us. It was very terrible. We thought they would never leave us."

"Did you meet the Yankee, Don David, with them?" asked Herran.

"Don David? But—is he not with you?" they asked in return.

"I left him when we met those insane volunteers."

"But, Senor General, they said that a young man—it must be Don David—went with you."

"Ah, caramba! Then they know nothing?"

"That is all, Senor."

"Then he is lost, that little fellow. He is not with me, he is not with those canaille—unless they hide him, or kill him. No one has seen him; he is lost—or dead."

Having reached this decision, there was nothing further to do except march to Bogota and telegraph from there the news of David's disappearance to his friends in Honda.

## X

### AN OLD MYSTERY

THE vanishing of David Meudon in broad daylight while traveling on one of the main thoroughfares of the Republic became the sensation of the hour in Bogota. It excited more interest even than the return of General Herran and his party from Panama. The tale of David's disappearance three years before was revived, and gossip found plenty of material from which to weave wild romance as to what had happened on both occasions. But you can't build up a durable romance without some solid fact to base it on, and since this whole affair was wrapped in mystery, lacking anything tangible, public interest gradually and inevitably died out. Among government leaders, however, owing to the strained relations existing between the United States and Colombia, there was some anxiety over the incident.

General Herran, who was related to the President of the Republic, and who was proved to have had nothing to do—consciously, that is—with the loss of Panama, declared that the government was responsible for David's disappearance. He argued that, as the country was not in a state of war, the marching of volunteer regiments on the public roads was a menace to foreigners having

business in Colombia, and that therefore these regiments should either be disbanded or else ample protection be given to all travelers who might encounter them. As it was too late to look after David—so said the General—his friends, who were about to set out for Bogota, should at least be guarded from a like fate on the way thither. Accordingly, as this view of the case was approved, a company of soldiers was sent to Honda—and thus it happened that Doctor Miranda, Leighton and his niece, Mrs. Quayle and the schoolmaster—recovered from his fever and the Doctor's pills—made the journey under military escort, arriving in the capital quite like official personages.

This novel manner of traveling, although it kept off vagrant militia, had its sinister features for the timid members of the party. Mrs. Quayle, whose fear of a burro grew in proportion as she became familiar with that harmless and necessary animal, believed that she and her friends had fallen captives, through a skillful bit of strategy, into the enemy's hands and were being led either to their death or imprisonment. To this belief she stuck, in spite of the vehemence and ridicule with which Doctor Miranda seasoned his arguments against it. Indeed, had she dared express her full opinion her suspicions would have involved the Doctor himself, whose explosive habits and other eccentricities kept her in a continual state of alarm that was increased, every now and then, by his malicious allusions to the jewelry she wore. Andrew, inclined to attribute his fever to the famous pills and the heroic treatment to which he had been subjected, secretly shared her feeling, and was in hourly dread of some new calamity striking him from the



same quarter. Harold Leighton and Una, however, were too much absorbed in David's mysterious fate to be greatly concerned by what was going on immediately around them. The old savant, unable to explain the disaster, was distressed beyond measure by the poignant grief of his niece. In his own mind he was convinced that the singular occurrence on the Honda road was related in some way to David's former disappearance, and this belief stimulated his professional eagerness to solve the puzzle presented by so strange a coincidence. Una's appeal, therefore, to go any length in the rescue of David needed no urging. It was met with a hearty promise of aid from Doctor Miranda, who stormed at the government, in and out of season, for permitting bands of peons to endanger the lives of harmless travelers.

The Doctor was especially indignant with Herran, who called upon the Americans before they were fairly settled in their hotel in Bogota. He pitched into this hapless officer with his choicest bits of vituperation, until Herran began to think that the loss of one man, under certain circumstances, was as serious an affair as the loss of an isthmus. Leighton, however, did not share Doctor Miranda's views of the matter.

"Miranda is unreasonable," he said to Herran. "There is a mystery in this case. You have done all you could to save the young man, and you are now offering to help us."

"That is right! That is right!" agreed Miranda. "We must find him."

"Anything I can do——" volunteered Herran.

"Do you know an American in this town by the name of Raoul Arthur?" interrupted Leighton.

"How not! But—I don't like him."

"Never mind. I must see him. If any one can unravel this thing, he can."

"Mr. Meudon spoke of him. I will find him for you."

"Do you know where he lives?"

"Surely, Senor. In the Calle Mercedes."

"Take me to him."

"Very well, Senor," said Herran, apparently overcoming his reluctance; "that is settled. First, I will be sure he is there. Then, this night, I take you to his house."

Una, hearing of this decision, doubted its wisdom. From the few references David had made to his partner in the Guatavita mining venture she had felt instinctively that Raoul was his enemy, an opinion strengthened by the psychometer test used at Stoneleigh. Leighton had agreed in this opinion, more or less; hence Una's surprise that her uncle, who was usually overcautious, should now turn to Raoul for help.

"I believe the man knows where David is," he declared.

"If he does, he will never tell you," remonstrated Una.

"I am not so sure of that."

"You may force him to do something fatal," she urged.

"On the contrary! By going to him at once I will prevent any foul play—if there is to be any foul play."

The possibility alarmed her. The suspense, the mystery surrounding David seemed more than she could bear. Bitterly she remembered Leighton's attitude towards him in Rysdale. And now that their trip to Bogota, insisted on from the first by her uncle, had ended as it had, her

faith in him was sadly shaken. She could not accept his judgment in a case about which he had already shown so grave a lack of foresight. Leighton, on his part, realized Una's distrust of him. He did not try to dispel this feeling; but the knowledge that it was there spurred him on to do his best and with the least possible delay.

So, that very evening Leighton, piloted by Herran, sought Raoul Arthur's abode on the Calle Mercedes. Like most Bogota houses of the humbler sort, this was a one-storied building, its heavy street door opening upon a wide brick corridor leading to a central patio from which the various rooms were reached. Following Colombian custom, the two men entered without announcement and made their way along the unlighted passage to the main living room, extending from the patio to the street. A lamp at the center of a long table heaped with books and papers distinguished this from the other rooms of the house, all of which were in darkness and apparently uninhabited. A man, somewhat past thirty, his hair slightly grizzled, his features pale and sharpened from study, sat at the table in this main room reading a much-worn leather-bound volume, the large black type and thick, yellowed paper of which gave ample proof of age. Aroused by the noise made by Leighton and Herran, he closed his book with a quick, nervous movement and turned to the doorway where his two visitors stood.

"This is Mr. Raoul Arthur?" asked Leighton grimly.

"Who are you?" demanded the other, his strange, shifting eyes on the massive figure before him.

"My name is Leighton. I am looking for David Meudon."

"He is not here," was the quick reply.

"I hardly expected to find him here," retorted the savant.

"Then why ask me for him?"

"You were once, if you are not now, Meudon's business partner. You must have heard of his disappearance. On his way from Honda to Bogota he—well, he simply vanished. That's the only way to describe it. It all happened, no one knows how, a few days ago. The same thing took place some years ago when he was living here with you. You know all about the details of that first disappearance."

"You are mistaken," interrupted Raoul. "David Meudon left me for a number of months. On his return he failed—or didn't think it worth while—to explain his absence."

"That is all very well. Perhaps he could, perhaps he couldn't explain it. At any rate, you thought that absence sufficiently peculiar to make it the subject of an article for the Psychological Journal."

Raoul flinched perceptibly under this statement. His cool indifference took on the sort of cordiality that repels one more than open enmity. Bending over the table before which he was standing, he occupied himself in elaborately sorting and rearranging some papers at which he had been working.

"Of course," he said, "I know you now! Mr. Harold Leighton. I didn't place the name at first, which was altogether stupid of me. I have often wanted to meet you. As a matter of fact, I heard of your coming. It's a rare treat in this out-of-the-way part of the world to run across a man who has advanced our knowledge of psychology as you have."

The profuse compliment was not relished by the old savant. "I am not aware that I have advanced our knowledge of psychology, as you put it, one iota," he said testily. "But I am here to add to the small stock of what I have already learned."

"You must have found David a rare problem!" exclaimed Raoul.

"You know him, perhaps, better than I do."

"Yes, I know him. That is, in a way. Engaging sort of chap. Clever, and all that. Mysterious, too, don't you think? So, he has disappeared again, you say?"

"Don't tell me that you have not known of it! The whole town has been talking about it."

"Rumors, only rumors," protested Raoul. "I would like to hear the real facts."

"This gentleman, General Herran, with whom Mr. Meudon was traveling, can tell you the facts, such as they are. But I can't see why you should need them."

Raoul turned to Leighton's companion, who had been trying to follow what the two men were saying. As they talked in English, a language of which he knew scarcely a word, he could make very little of it. Asked, in Spanish, to give the details of his ride with David, he made an excellent story of it, relating something of the discussion that had absorbed them while on the road together, the friendly feeling that had grown up between them, its touch of conviviality, and their abrupt separation in the midst of their encounter with the regiment of volunteers.

Raoul listened intently to Herran's narrative, his glance roving restlessly from the narrator to his companion and



back again, as if to compare the effect on both of what was said.

"It's a strange tale, Senor," he commented when Heran had come to the end. "These things with a touch of mystery in them are always fascinating—until you stumble on the clew. Then it's very simple. I suppose you have no theory to explain our friend's disappearance?"

"None, Senor."

"You have just told me, Mr. Leighton," he went on, addressing the latter, "that you are here to add to your knowledge of psychology."

"I did."

"Well, what do you make of it? Here's what you are looking for—a neat psychological problem right to your hand."

"I don't see it," said the savant impatiently.

"That's always the way with you great scientists! But—it's simple," declared Raoul, a note of triumph in his voice; "absolutely simple—if you know David as well as I do."

"I said that you probably know him better. I have not known him as long or as intimately as you have. But—again I fail to see what psychology has to do with it."

"It has everything to do with it. David was not spirited away, as you seem to imagine. He disappeared of his own accord."

"There is every reason to think the contrary," said Leighton contemptuously.

"Oh, of course I may be wrong in my theory. But, as there is no other evidence, I see only one solution.

It's the clew we are after, you know—and the clew is right under your nose."

"Perhaps you are on the wrong scent. Some investigators have a knack of being cocksure about everything. But—explain your meaning."

"Very well. Let's talk as one psychologist to another, then. Meudon has a peculiar temperament. You probably know that. But you may not know that the dual personality is highly developed in him. Under strong, sudden excitement this personality becomes greatly exaggerated."

"He was laboring under no particular excitement at the time of his disappearance," objected Leighton.

"What about the mission he was on? I have an idea that it was of absorbing importance to him. Remember, he was revisiting scenes connected with an episode that for some years he has been trying to forget but which he now wants to revive. And then, to cap the climax, suddenly he comes, slap bang, right into the midst of a rabble of peons who would be only too glad to kill him, or imprison him, or torture him—or anything else unpleasant. The same crowd tried to get me once, so I know what it all means."

"All this is true; but the excitement was hardly enough to drown David's normal personality."

"It all helps, though. It predisposes things. It is, as I look at it, the final stage setting, with all the characters in their places awaiting the entrance of the villain to finish up the tragedy. And in this case the villain entered just at the critical moment. Mr. Leighton," he asked abruptly, "have you ever known David to drink a glass of wine?"

"I can't say that I have," he answered doubtfully.

"Well, alcoholic stimulus, with certain temperaments—you know what it does. It starts up an altogether abnormal psychology, doesn't it?"

"Very apt to."

"Depends a little on the stage setting, doesn't it? But, even without that it has its odd effects. On rare occasions, for instance, I have known Meudon to take a single drink of liquor. The result has been similar to that brought on by hypnotism."

"Well?"

"There's your clew!" Raoul announced triumphantly. "You have heard General Herran's story. He tells us that just before they parted he and David drank several toasts together—and the toasts, I fancy, were stronger than mere wine."

"You think, then——"

"Why, it's childishly simple! David was knocked over by a force, an influence, to which he is unaccustomed. He is not at all a drinking man, you understand. Quite the reverse. With him the effect of drink would not be in the least like ordinary intoxication. From two former experiences I know that it would be far subtler. It would produce what you would call a pseudo-hypnosis, a condition of abnormal psychology."

"Well?"

"Don't you see what happened?"

"I have not had your experience with David," was the sarcastic reply.

"It is not a question of mere personal experience," said Raoul irritably; "it involves what we know—or guess—of the eccentricities of the human soul."

"You are an enthusiast. Be more explicit. Don't wander off in your statements."

"Very well. I'll put it in the lingo of science as nearly as I can. It appears to me, then, that David, by this little exchange of pistol shots, as you call them, with General Herran, brought into activity a portion of his brain that had not, for a number of years, intruded itself upon his conscious life. It had literally been sleeping all that time. On the last occasion when it was awake—when, in other words, he was under the sway of this subconscious ego—he was here, amid the very scenes in which he again finds himself. A moment ago you connected his first disappearance with the one which has just taken place on the road from Honda. Well, the General's 'pistol,' as he calls it, suddenly threw David back into the memory of that first subconscious experience."

"The Ghost of the Forgotten found at last," mused Leighton, more to himself than to Raoul.

"Exactly! That's a good way to put it."

"Suppose your theory correct; what happened after David's subconscious memory was awakened?"

"As a psychologist, you are better able to answer that than I."

"I am not interested in abstruse problems just now. I am here simply to find David."

"Difficult, perhaps. I couldn't find him before. But at least I have given you the clew."

"Your clew doesn't explain. I don't know what to do with it."

"A restatement of my theory may clear things up. Through a combination of certain circumstances, exerting

upon him a peculiar influence, David is living again in an environment and through a set of experiences that belong to him only when he is in what we call a condition of secondary personality. Discover that environment—the same, I believe, as the one in which he was lost three years ago—and you will discover David.”

Leighton made no comment. He regarded Raoul with characteristic immobility. One gathered from his silence, however, that he was impressed with what he had just heard. Slowly pacing the length of the sala, he stopped before General Herran, who, through his ignorance of English, was in a quite helpless state of bewilderment at the turn the interview between the two men had taken.

“This young man will help us find Meudon,” said Leighton in his broken Spanish.

“He knows where he is?” asked Herran eagerly.

“He knows—something,” replied the savant with significant emphasis. “For one thing, General, those pistol shots you had with Meudon seem to have played the devil.”

“Caramba! Does he say so? But that is foolishness!”

“No, it is theory,” said Leighton drily.

“How will he prove it?”

“By finding Meudon.”

There was a finality in the tone of Leighton’s rejoinder which, more than the words themselves, indicated the seeker’s conviction that the road to David’s discovery was in plain view. Raoul Arthur, however, said nothing. Standing aloof from his two visitors, apparently not heeding them, his silence aroused Leighton’s curiosity.



"Naturally, I depend on you, Arthur," said the old man, with an emphasis that sounded like a threat.

"I don't know why," he demurred. "David was with your party when this happened. I failed to find him three years ago, you know."

"There is no proof that you did anything then to rescue the man who was your friend and business partner," retorted Leighton. "This time failure might be fatal—for you."

The words and Leighton's manner had their effect. Shaking off his real, or assumed, apathy, Raoul faced his accuser angrily.

"I have given you the one clew of which I have any knowledge," he said, meeting Leighton for the first time eye to eye. "I have done what I could, I will still do what I can. But I won't act at the dictation of a man of whom I know nothing, whom I never even met until this moment."

"That's all very well," replied the other imperturbably. "But, as I said, I depend on you—quite naturally, it seems to me—to help in the recovery of your friend. My niece and I are in this country for the express purpose of solving David's former disappearance."

"Your niece?"

"Yes; the woman whom David expects to marry."

Raoul's defiant attitude vanished before this announcement. Irritation gave place to amazement, distrust turned to friendliness. Nor did he attempt to conceal his appetite for further news of David's personal affairs.

"David wrote me nothing of this," he said. "From

his letter I learned that he was coming with friends. He did not tell me who these friends were."

"Well, there's every reason why I should be frank with you—as I expect you to be frank with me."

"You are still suspicious. What can I do, or say? I tell you, I don't know where David is."

"Do you know where he was when he disappeared from Bogota three years ago?"

"No."

"Strange! A man with all your interests at stake in this puzzle—surely you must have reached some conclusion?"

"I tell you, I have not," he replied sharply. "I know nothing, absolutely nothing."

"You admit you have a theory—let's call it that—a theory that fits the facts so far as you know them?"

"That's your deduction," sneered the other.

"But, I'm right?"

"Possibly," Raoul answered, turning again to the papers that littered his writing table.

"That's all I want," declared Leighton with satisfaction. "Now, we will plan our campaign."

Raoul, engrossed in a large, musty document which he had spread before him, greeted the proposal with a shrug of his shoulders. General Herran, impatient at the apparently futile and—to him—incomprehensible discussion, consumed innumerable cigarettes, while Leighton, with the air of one for whom waiting is an enjoyment, settled himself comfortably in a capacious rocking-chair.

The ensuing silence was rudely broken. There was a vigorous pounding upon the outer door, followed by

the abrupt and noisy entrance into the house of some one from the street. Whoever it was, this late visitor stood little upon ceremony. But Leighton and General Herran had no difficulty in recognizing the nervous shuffle of feet along the stone corridor, the thump of the heavy walking-stick, accompanied by grunts of dissatisfaction and suppressed wrath. When Doctor Miranda finally bolted into the room, fanning himself as usual—although fans were a decidedly uncomfortable superfluity in the chilly night air of Bogota—they were, in a way, prepared for him.

"He is gone! He is lost—that leetle fellow! There is one more lost of them!" he shouted, repeating his disjointed English in staccato Spanish, as soon as he caught sight of his two friends.

Leighton and Herran exchanged amazed glances at this enigmatic bit of intelligence, while Raoul, preoccupied and restless though he was, could not restrain a grin at the unconventional being who had rolled his way, unannounced, into his house.

"What do you mean?" demanded Leighton.

"I tell you, he is lost, that leetle schoolmaster!" Miranda exploded.

"Andrew Parmelee lost? Impossible!"

"You are an estupido," retorted the Doctor angrily.

"I say he is lost. Before my eyes he disappear. I never lie, I never mistake."

Not caring to discuss this announcement, Leighton tried to divert the torrent of words into something like a coherent statement. But in his present excitable mood Doctor Miranda floundered hopelessly in a morass of verbal difficulties and ended by telling his story in alter-

nate layers of Spanish and English. From his account, however, his hearers were able to put together the main points of an occurrence that, vehemently vouched for though it was by the narrator, strained their credulity to the limit.

Early that morning, it appeared, Doctor Miranda, accompanied by the reluctant Andrew, had left Bogota for a visit to Lake Guatavita. The report that David's disappearance three years before had taken place there was given as the reason for the trip. Arrived at the lake, Andrew had declined to accompany the Doctor in his search among the cliffs that guarded the mysterious body of water, and had stationed himself near the cutting made centuries before by the Spaniards. This was a comparatively well sheltered spot and sufficiently removed from the precipitous shore which the cautious schoolmaster was anxious to avoid. His investigations concluded after the lapse of something like two hours, Miranda returned to the old Spanish cutting, expecting to rejoin Andrew. But Andrew was not there. Surprised at not finding him, the doctor at first supposed that the schoolmaster had grown tired of waiting and had journeyed back to Bogota alone. A single circumstance proved that in this he was wrong. There stood Andrew's horse where he had originally left him—and it seemed altogether unlikely that his rider had deliberately set out to cover the long and arduous miles to Bogota afoot.

"Another puzzle in psychology, I suppose," commented Leighton, with a sarcastic glance at Raoul Arthur.

The latter, however, in spite of the fact that Andrew was an utter stranger to him, appeared to be more

amazed than the others by Miranda's story, and for the moment paid no heed to Leighton.

"When you found his horse you made a thorough search for your friend, of course, Senor?" he asked Miranda eagerly.

"Caramba! leetle fellow, what you think?" was the impatient reply. "I look, and I look, and I call—fifty times I call. If I can swim I jump into the lake to find him there. But I am too fat. So, I call more times, and I throw stones, and make the trumpet with the hands. It is no use. That leetle fellow say nothing. He is not there. So, I come away after long time."

"He is drowned, poor fellow," murmured Herran in Spanish.

"It is not possible," declared Miranda, turning angrily upon the general. "What make him drown? Of the water he is afraid. If he fall in—by mistake—he make a noise, he call to me. I am close by, I hear—I go to him quickly. But I hear nothing."

"Well, if he didn't drown, as our friend argues, what did become of him?" demanded Leighton.

"Ah, Senor," replied Miranda, his mobile features expressing hopeless bewilderment, "I do not know. It is just so as I tell you; he disappear, he vanish, he is gone. If I know where, I find him—I would not be here."

"So, there are two disappearances to account for," summed up Leighton. "Foreigners visiting Bogota seem to have the trick of vanishing. What do you make of it, Mr. Arthur?"

"I am as much at a loss as you."

"Hardly that, I should think. You, at least, know all about this mysterious lake. You know what happened



there three years ago, for instance. And then you know——”

“You credit me with a great deal more knowledge than I can lay claim to,” interrupted Raoul. “I never heard of this man who has been lost, as your excitable friend tells us, in such a singular manner—this Mr. Andrew——”

“Parmelee,” supplied the other. “Andrew Parmelee, schoolmaster, of Rysdale, Connecticut. He is a very excellent person who, through his devotion to my niece and myself, has fallen, I fear, a victim to some strange plot. You will join us, I have no doubt, in his rescue. I am ignorant of the psychology of Guatavita. However, as I have already told you, I am here to add to my stock of psychological knowledge, and I fancy there are few who could teach me more, in cases of this kind, than you.”

The sarcasm was not lost on Miranda, who shrugged his shoulders, muttered some unintelligible Spanish imprecation and exchanged a comprehending glance with General Herran. Raoul Arthur, on the other hand, ignored the tone Leighton had adopted in addressing him. In his reply he dropped the irritation and suspicion with which he had first regarded the old savant, and there was even cordiality in the manner and look accompanying his somewhat ceremonious acceptance of the task imposed upon him.

“If I thought it possible of so profound a scholar, Professor Leighton,” he laughed, “I would say you were chaffing me. As it is, I feel the honor in your proposal that I should join you in solving these mysterious dis-

appearances. Perhaps I can be of some help. At any rate, depend on me for whatever I can do."

"Two Americans unaccountably disappear in the heart of Colombia," mused Leighton. "If it were not for certain odd circumstances, I should say the country's indignation over the loss of Panama had something to do with it."

Against this suggestion Miranda impatiently protested.

"Impossible!" he shouted. "Always these people fight with the gun, the machete, if they are angry. They make much noise and talk; never they steal the enemies of their country and say nothing. It is one plot—and perhaps this senor will know," he concluded, darting an accusing glance at Roaul.

But Raoul, now thoroughly composed, smiled disdainfully, although agreeing in Doctor Miranda's rejection of Leighton's half-formed theory.

"If it is necessary," he assured them, "I can easily prove that I have had nothing to do with all this. I have not been out of Bogota for a month or more. Besides, I have the strongest business reasons for wanting the safe return of David Meudon to this country. As for Mr. Parmelee; I repeat—I never heard of him before. But, I agree with our friend here; the disappearance of these two men has nothing to do with the Panama trouble. It is something else. There is a mystery about it. I have no doubt it can be solved."

"You have the clew?" demanded Leighton.

"I didn't say that."

"Well?"

"Perhaps I know some one here—a woman—who could help us."

But that evening, after the departure of his visitors, Raoul Arthur found the little house in the Calle de las Flores tenantless, and learned that the woman, known to the neighborhood as La Reina de los Indios, had left Bogota, with all her household effects, a week before.

## XI

### IN WHICH ANDREW IS FOUND

**P**UZZLED at not finding Sajipona, uncertain how to take up the promise he had given in regard to her, an altogether unexpected turn of events awaited Raoul at Leighton's hotel the next morning. Andrew Parmelee had been found. In the custody of two delighted police officers the missing schoolmaster, bewildered, quite speechless from his nocturnal experience, had made his appearance, scarcely an hour before Raoul's arrival. When, thanks to Miranda's persistent prodding, backed by the calm questioning of Leighton and Una's sympathetic ministrations, he found his tongue, the account Andrew gave of his adventure was so wildly improbable that his friends were inclined to believe he had been the victim of some temporary mental delusion. But this did not answer the threefold question: what had brought on his delusion, how had he escaped the vigilant Miranda, and how had he fallen into the hands of the police.

The two officers gave a simple statement of what, so far as they knew, had happened.

Late the night before, they said, Andrew had wandered into the alcalde's office in a little pueblo a few miles this side of Guatavita. His appearance, manner and mental condition—they hinted broadly enough that

the luckless Andrew, when first found was in a very irresponsible condition indeed—called for the protection of the law. But as the poor gentleman, they said, was apparently suffering from nothing more than the effects of a too convivial outing in the country, he had been put in jail, not as a punishment, but rather as an act of humanity. Unable to express himself in Spanish, Andrew had evidently been something of a puzzle to the simple-minded officials of the pueblo. Out of his incoherent jumble of words, however, the name of a hotel in Bogota had been seized upon. A telephone message was sent to the municipal police, and the two officers who now had him in charge were detailed to conduct him in safety to his friends. Beyond this, the clearing up of the mystery of his temporary disappearance—if mystery it was—rested with Andrew himself. But he, for a time, was unable to satisfy the curiosity of his questioners.

"I don't understand it myself," he said hopelessly, addressing himself, in the main, to Leighton, whose calm demeanor was less confusing than the badgering of the excitable Doctor. "All I know is, that when Doctor Miranda went off to make some explorations on his own account, I felt a little nervous at finding myself alone in such a dismal place. Not frightened, you know, but just nervous."

"Why you not call to me?" demanded Miranda.

"There was really no reason to call for help, you see, as nothing had happened. So, just to pass the time until Doctor Miranda came back, I walked along the edge of the lake, feeling very miserable, I confess, wondering what had become of Mr. Meudon, and wishing that we were all out of this terrible country and back in Rys-



dale. At first, there was nothing to alarm me particularly; but the more I thought about the disappearance of Mr. Meudon the more nervous I became. And then, just as I was wondering if we would ever find him, and feeling more uneasy at the strange silence of that melancholy lake——”

“Caramba! You would have the lake to talk?”

“I—I heard footsteps among the rocks behind me.”

“A sightseer from Bogota, I suppose,” suggested Leighton.

“No, it was not exactly that—at least, I don’t think so. But at first I really didn’t turn around to see. I just kept on looking at the lake and going over some of the terrible stories I had heard about it.”

“You see, this leetle fellow was quite mad with the fright,” interjected Miranda. “He dream. He hear, he see nothing. Nobody was there. I know.”

“I think, Sir, you are mistaken,” protested the schoolmaster. “I admit I was nervous. But I was perfectly sane—and I was not asleep.”

“Of course you were not asleep, Mr. Parmelee,” said Una soothingly. “As for being nervous—any one would have been nervous.”

“Well?” inquired Leighton impatiently.

“Well, Sir, as I was saying, I heard footsteps. They approached me. I made up my mind I had better see who it was. I turned around. And then I saw, a few yards from me, a stranger. How he came there without my having seen him before, I can’t imagine. And then, thinking about this, I confess I became quite agitated.”

“But what was he like, what did he say?” demanded Leighton. “It was a man, I suppose?”

"Oh, yes, I am quite sure he was a man—a very tall man, and singularly dressed."

"Singularly dressed?"

"I thought so, at least. But then, I am not familiar with the fashions of this country. You see, it is very cold on the shores of the lake, and I should think that any one going there would want at least to be warmly clad. But this man had nothing on that I could see, except a long sort of toga, just like the pictures I have studied in Herodotus. It was looped up on one shoulder through what looked like a golden ring——"

"He dream! He dream! this leetle fellow!" laughed Miranda. "He is too good."

"And this toga fell down to a point just below his knees. It was a purple and white toga—or perhaps I ought to call it a tunic—with a fringe of gold tassels. He had sandals on his bare feet and wore no trousers—at least, I could see none."

"Caramba!"

"Really, Mr. Parmelee, you describe a very singular sort of person for this age and climate," said Leighton coldly. "Are you sure that your agitated state of mind—you admit you were agitated—did not create a purely imaginary apparition?"

"Did I not say he dream?" demanded Miranda triumphantly. "And the police say he drink. But that is not so—he never drink. I know. I am there."

"I am very sorry, Sir; I know it sounds ridiculous," protested the distressed Andrew. "But I am certain that I was not asleep—or anything else that these well-meaning gentlemen say. I am only telling you what I really saw."

"Well, tell us the whole story. Setting aside this person's remarkable costume, what was he like, what did he say?"

"I don't think he said anything. He was an Indian. That is, he was not a white man. I never saw any one just like him, so I may not be right about the race to which he belongs."

Andrew's confused statement brought protests from Leighton as well as Miranda.

"In this country," remarked Leighton dogmatically, "a man is either an Indian, a white, or a half-breed. There are no negroes up here, you know. The negroes all stayed on the coast. As for your inability to tell us whether he spoke or not—well, the whole thing begins to sound absurd."

But the rebuke failed to bring out anything more clear in the way of explanation from Andrew.

"Pray, Sir, remember," he expostulated, "that at the time of this stranger's appearance evening was setting in. The growing darkness prevented anything like a reliable estimate that I could have made of his features. In the twilight he seemed dark to me, although not so dark as the average Indian. And yet, allowing for the twilight, he certainly was not a white man."

"But what happened?" urged Leighton.

"He appeared surprised at seeing me. And then he smiled, approached to where I was standing, and waved a sort of salutation to me. I think he may have muttered some words, either of invitation or friendly greeting. But if he did, it was not in English, nor in Spanish."

"He, at least, was not agitated, it seems! But as you

were afflicted with more than the usual amount of timidity, I suppose you avoided him."

"I assure you, Sir, that as soon as I saw this person, I felt no further fear. There was nothing threatening in his manner. And it flashed through my mind that he could give me some information about Mr. Meudon. I observed that he beckoned me to him—and as he did so I followed."

"Well?"

"That was the singular part of it. There was every reason why I should not go with him—at least, not without first notifying Doctor Miranda. But this strange being smiled so pleasantly and seemed so friendly that my feeling of nervousness passed away, and I was eager to go with him. This I did. Apparently he retraced his steps, leading me along the shore of a little inlet to the lake until we reached a high wall of rock that I had not particularly noticed before. Here he stopped and looked at me, still smiling, as if to make sure that I was following him."

"Do you think you could identify this wall of rock if you were to see it again?" asked Raoul Arthur, speaking for the first time.

"I am sure I could," said Andrew, "because we stood in front of it for some time, this strange person in the toga passing his hand over its surface, while I wondered what he was going to do next. I noticed that it was a very high and blank wall indeed."

"Where was it?"

"Just next to the cutting that Doctor Miranda had told me was made by the Spaniards to drain the lake."

"I did not see this wall," expostulated Miranda. "You are in one dream."

"Never mind," snapped Leighton; "go on with your story."

"I am afraid you will believe me less than ever," said Andrew deprecatingly. "But I am only telling what I am certain I saw."

"Go on."

"As he passed his hand over the surface of the wall he gradually turned to one side until we stood before a narrow cleft in the rocks."

"It is not there," interrupted Miranda contemptuously. "I examine all this rock. It has no—what you call?—cleft."

"I am very sorry, Sir, but I know that there is such a cleft. I think that is what you would call it. You might easily have overlooked it, Sir. It was only a narrow opening in the rock, facing away from the lake and reaching up not more than about three feet from the ground."

"I remember it," declared Raoul.

"Pray go on with your story, Mr. Parmelee," Leighton commanded.

"There is not much more to tell, although the little that remains is quite the most extraordinary part of it. Pausing an instant before this opening in the rock, my strange guide crouched down until he was able to pass within it, beckoned me to follow him, and then disappeared."

The schoolmaster spoke with difficulty, hesitating every now and then for the word that would best express what had happened. Having plunged into his story, however,



he went bravely on, gaining courage as he recalled his singular experiences, and impressing those who heard him with the sincerity, if not the truth, of the narrative. Of all his auditors Raoul, apparently, followed him with the closest attention. His attitude, indeed, seemed to indicate a belief, on his part, in Andrew's statements.

"I hesitated about following this unknown man into so strange a place," continued Andrew; "but his manner was so perfectly courteous and friendly—and then I thought that behind all this mystery there might be something to help us find Mr. Meudon—that I made up my mind to keep with him as long as possible. I crouched down, therefore, as I had seen him do, forced my way through the narrow opening in the rock, and presently, after a little difficulty, found myself in a dark passage that afforded me room to stand upright and move forward. I could dimly perceive my guide walking at some distance in front of me, and I hastened as well as I could to reach him. In this I did not succeed, and so we followed the passage, he leading and I after him, for a hundred yards or more, until we came to an abrupt angle in the wall where the uneven path made a sharp dip downward. Here I stopped, having completely lost sight of my guide, and after waiting a short time I called to him. No answer came that I could hear, and in the darkness that surrounded me I began to grow confused and alarmed. It seemed to me I had been lured into some sort of trap. Repenting of my folly for having ventured so far into such a dismal hole, I determined to get out of it as quickly as possible. This, I thought, would be easily done because, to the best of my knowledge, I had followed along a straight corridor and, if I

turned back, I would soon come within sight of the opening that led to the lake. But either I had miscalculated the distance I had walked, or else, in turning to go out I started in the wrong direction. At any rate, I had not gone very far before I found myself in a labyrinth of passages. I perceived this by feeling along the wall. And so—there I was, without any clew to help me in choosing the right passage.

"I scarcely know what I did when I realized that I was hopelessly lost in this pitch black cavern. For one thing, I shouted for help, thinking that possibly Doctor Miranda might hear me. But the echoes from my voice were more terrifying than the silence. The air was stifling; the ground appeared to move beneath my feet; the darkness was like a heavy veil winding closer and closer about me. Then, unable, as it seemed to me, to move or breathe any longer, everything went from me. I sank to the floor unconscious. And that's all I remember."

"But—how you say that? You are here, leetle fellow," blurted Miranda. "You are all right."

"Yes, I am here," Andrew assented woefully. "But I don't know how I got here. When I came to myself again I was lying on the shore of the lake. It was quite dark. My horse had gone——"

"That is right; I take him," corroborated Miranda, with satisfaction.

"I don't know how I succeeded in doing it—I suppose it was instinct—but I managed to follow the trail on foot, and after a desperate struggle I reached the village where the people helped me to get back to Bogota."

Andrew's story was variously received. No one could

doubt his honesty. With such transparent simplicity as his, it would be difficult to suppose him capable of drawing—consciously at least—upon his fancy. Doctor Miranda suggested that he merely dreamed what he afterwards took to be reality. But the others, discrediting this theory, were apparently inclined to accept the story, so far as it went, in spite of its fantastic and well nigh incredible features. Raoul Arthur appeared particularly impressed and proposed immediate action.

"I know the cleft in the rock," he said. "I have been over a small part of the passage to which it gives entrance. It was there, three years ago, in our attempt to undermine Lake Guatavita, that a charge of dynamite exploded, after which David Meudon disappeared. I had no idea that this passage extended back into the mountain as far as it does, according to Mr. Parmelee's story. But now—it strikes me, Mr. Leighton, that chance has given us the clew you were seeking last night. If you are still anxious to trace David's whereabouts, the path lies down the passage entered by Mr. Parmelee and his togaed, sandaled guide."

"You want to explore it?" demanded Leighton.

"I do."

"But why, if it was already known to you, have you not done this before?"

"The natives have always fought shy of going into it further than our mining operations made necessary. Besides, I never had any reason to suppose that it was more than a mere natural formation of rock—as it probably is—extending a short distance into the main body of the mountain."

"And now?"

"I have no theory to advance. But," he added significantly, "it was in this unexplored tunnel that David disappeared three years ago."

The reminder had its effect. This linking up of the mysterious tunnel that had so nearly proved fatal to Andrew, with David's first adventure suggested the possible solution of a problem that had baffled them until now. In spite of Miranda's derisive comments on the schoolmaster's "fairy tale," there seemed to be only one thing to do—explore the tunnel. It might lead nowhere, and in that case the labor and the risk—if risk there was—would be of small account. If, however, it was the entrance to a subterranean dwelling, inhabited by people of whom the strange being described by Andrew was a specimen, the discovery was well worth making.

"We will rescue David!" exclaimed Una, the eagerness of hope in her voice.

"But, my young lady," protested Miranda; "he goes away many miles from this tunnel."

"That is true," assented Leighton.

"All the same, David was lost there before," Raoul reminded him. "It is a clue we are bound to follow."

The question remained, how carry out the proposed exploration? Equipped with miners' lamps, a number of which, of the best pattern, were still among the stores David and Raoul had brought to Colombia at the beginning of their venture, the worst difficulty—darkness—could easily be overcome. Firearms, a supply of provisions, and oil for the lamps, were other items obviously needed. But the essential thing was, as Doctor Miranda tersely put it, "brains"—a cool-headed leader

who would bring them back to the entrance of the tunnel in case of danger. General Herran, with his military training and experience, was the man for this rôle. This hero of unfought battles was thereupon chosen captain of the expedition—not, however, without some modest disclaimers of ability on his part.

"There will be five of us then," remarked Leighton. "General Herran, Doctor Miranda, Arthur, Parmelee and myself."

"There will be six," amended Una.

"Six?"

"I will be one of the party."

"Preposterous! You might as well make it seven, and include Mrs. Quayle."

"I wouldn't think of going," declared that lady quivering with agitation.

"It is not for the womens," argued Miranda, in his most conciliatory manner. "There may be troubles, and we want only the mens."

Una turned on him fiercely.

"I don't believe there is any danger," she cried; "but, anyway, I am going. I am certain David is there. I will go!"

To all of which Miranda gave an untranslatable exclamation denoting sympathy, admiration for the pluck of this unexpected volunteer. Leighton, however, was less easily moved, and it was not until his niece assured him that she would return if the expedition promised to be a dangerous one, that he consented to her passionate plea.



## XII

### A DEAD WALL

MRS. QUAYLE objected to being parted from Una. She objected vigorously—vigorously, at least, as compared to her usual manner of taking things. She complained that guarding the baggage in a strange country, where it was impossible to make even her simplest wants intelligible, was not the sort of thing she was there for. But she could not turn Una from her purpose; nor was it any easier, once his consent was given, to move Leighton to a reconsideration of the matter. Only one thing was left for her to do. If she wished to keep within reach of Una she would have to accompany her on the expedition—"the picnic," as Leighton grimly called it. She hated to do this, but, as solicitude for Una was stronger than concern for her own safety, she had ended by tremblingly begging to be of the party.

"Let her come," said Miranda derisively. "It will not be for long time."

So Mrs. Quayle, much as she hated adventures, got what she wanted.

Early next morning, mounted on mules and carrying their supply of provisions neatly packed in hampers, they reached Lake Guatavita. Judging by appearances, one would say that they were after nothing more serious

than a day's outing. The air was crisp and sparkling, of that crystal clearness peculiar to Andean altitudes. The lake laughed in the sunlight; whatever there was of gloomy legend connected with it slumbered beneath its silvery surface. Even the timorous felt the joy of the place and indulged in hopes of high adventure. Miranda was in the best of humor; Leighton, although maintaining his reserve, relaxed something of his usual severity; while the rest of the party was in high spirits, showing scarcely anything of the mental and physical strain to which they had been subjected during the last twenty-four hours. Only Una appeared anxious. Raoul Arthur, the more she saw of him, disquieted her. She disliked him intensely, she could not tell exactly why. He was assiduous in his regard for her comfort, but, in spite of his outward friendliness, she was haunted by certain hints that had come to her from David, hints that made of Raoul, in some inexplicable way, an active enemy to the man she loved. She was suspicious of him. His presence on the expedition that had David's rescue for its purpose made her twist everything he did into something treacherous, of danger to all of them. Her uncle, apparently, did not share her feeling. On the contrary, he seemed to rely more and more on Raoul for advice and direction in carrying out the project upon which he was engaged, and thus there grew up between the two men a confidence that Una, had she tried, would have been unable to shake.

Andrew, of course, still smarting from the experience of two days before, could not be expected to make so speedy a return to the scene of his adventure without some trepidation. But whatever sensations thrilled his

susceptible heart, he put on a brave front and did not flinch from the part he was expected to take in the expedition. There was that dreadful lake, there the wall of rock he had described, and there the inconspicuous opening to the tunnel from whose hidden dangers he had been so mysteriously rescued—he faced it all and braced himself for the inevitable explanations. But his knowledge of the place was far less than Raoul's.

"It was through this opening to Mr. Parmelee's tunnel that we entered upon the excavation by which we hoped to drain the lake three years ago," he remarked.

From an engineering point of view the statement was mystifying because the opening of the tunnel was almost on a level with the surface of the lake. Thus, it was difficult to see what would have been gained had the waters of the latter been diverted into the tunnel. It was explained, however, that an intersecting tunnel at a very much lower level furnished the desired outlet, and the miners had planned to connect with this. As Leighton and the rest were not concerned in these bygone matters, the abortive attempts of the mining company to use this subterranean passage in the mountain was not traced out in detail. Time was urgent; there was no telling how long they might be in the tunnel. If they wanted to avoid making a night of it they would have to hurry.

Unloading the mules, therefore, of their provisions, and leaving these melancholy animals in the care of two peons who had come with them from Bogota, the picnickers equipped themselves for their adventure—that is, they fastened the miners' lamps to their hats. In the case of the men this was not difficult. But Mrs. Quayle's

extraordinary headgear, architecturally deceptive and insecure, proved so hopelessly difficult that its estimable owner was forced to do without the adornment of tin and kerosene provided for her. The more stable bit of millinery worn by Una was tractable enough, and with her lamp attached firmly to her gray felt hat she looked the part she expected to play.

The opening to the tunnel was much as Andrew had described it, an inconspicuous, narrow rift at the base of a great wall of rock. In nine cases out of ten it would pass unnoticed; so small an aperture, concealed by bushes and trailing vines, was safe from the most inquisitive travelers. That so timid a person as the school-master had discovered (no one took seriously his tale of the togaed and sandaled stranger) and forced his way through this opening caused no end of wonder. To accomplish the same feat drew forth many a groan from the corpulent Leighton and Miranda. As for Mrs. Quayle, what with the squeezing and tugging needed to gain an entrance into the region of terrors beyond, and anxiety lest some of her jewelry might be lost in such strenuous effort, that good lady came dangerously near a condition of hopeless panic. Undoubtedly she would have abandoned the expedition then and there had it not been for the jeers of Miranda who assured her she was developing symptoms that called for a generous dose of his infallible pills. Such a goad would electrify the stubbornest of mules and a series of desperate struggles brought Mrs. Quayle victoriously through the tunnel's entrance.

This first step in their subterranean travels surmounted, the explorers, having lighted their lamps, found

themselves in a spacious rock chamber, the walls of which rose above them to a majestic height. Andrew, especially, was amazed at what he saw, declaring that it was all quite different from his first experience in the same place. When it was remembered, however, that on this former occasion the schoolmaster had only the feeble glimmer of light that found its way through the opening of the cave to show him where he was, the difference between his two impressions was not surprising. But it puzzled his companions to choose the route they were to follow in their explorations. Here Andrew could not help them. Two passages were discovered leading from the chamber in which they stood. One went straight ahead, offering a fairly easy, unobstructed path to the explorer. The other, a branch from the main tunnel, was narrow, strewn with debris of fallen rock, and altogether forbidding in the glimpse that could be had of the first few hundred feet of its course. One feature, however, belonging to this smaller tunnel gave it the preference. But before discovering this feature and making their choice the explorers thought it best to inform themselves, as well as they could, of the character of the cave itself. In this Leighton naturally took the lead, and from his investigations it was concluded that, unlike other caves, the origin of the Guatavita cave was primarily volcanic and due only secondarily to the action of water.

The implement employed by Nature in fashioning her underground caverns is usually water. Some mighty spring, deep within the earth's bosom, seeks an outlet for its accumulating current. It forces its way through whatever porous layer of rock comes in its path, and by



persistent action, occupying ages of time, disintegrates and destroys it altogether. There is left, as a result of the subterranean stream's activity, a series of tunnels, widening out oftentimes into great rock chambers, and extending, in several well known instances, for many miles. Wherever water is the sole architect the lines that it carves, the forms it molds, are smooth, well-rounded; there are no jagged edges, sharp angles in the fairy palaces and intricate labyrinths that it leaves as specimens of its artistic method. The walls of the Guatavita tunnel, however, were eloquent of a totally different force employed in their making. The marks of an angry Titan were upon them; the Titan of Fire. They told of an elemental tragedy, swift and cataclysmic in its action. The deep scars in their surfaces, the rough crags and pinnacles jutting from them, were the epic characters in which the monster's struggle for freedom were written down for all posterity to study and wonder at.

Thus, Leighton did not hesitate to attribute an igneous origin to the cave, and it was after a close examination of the earth and pebble-strewn floor that the smaller tunnel was chosen as the best for exploration. There were footprints in both tunnels, but in this one they were more numerous than in the other, where they had been made, according to Raoul, at the time dynamite had been used in the excavations. Comparing these footprints, those in the larger tunnel were evidently from ordinary shoes, while in the smaller they bore the impress of sandals.

"Andrew's man in the toga is the one we want," remarked Leighton, a decision that added to Mrs. Quayle's

agitation and did not appear to increase the schoolmaster's desire for adventure. The discovery of the imprint of sandaled feet, however, changed Doctor Miranda's attitude toward Andrew from banter almost to admiration.

"It is true, what he say, this leetle fellow," he declared in astonishment. "He follow him here, the sandals—and he is alone. He is brave man, this Parmelee!"

Raoul remained silent and Herran shrugged his shoulders skeptically. After all, it was difficult to believe, on the strength of a mere footprint, that the singular being described by the schoolmaster actually existed and had disappeared, like some wraith, in the depths of the cave.

"That will be a hard path to follow," said Raoul finally. "I tried it—once."

"What did you find?"

"Nothing—a dead wall."

"Mercy!" ejaculated Mrs. Quayle, not catching his meaning.

"There was no danger that I could see," continued Raoul; "but there was hard traveling, and no result worth the effort."

"Did you notice these footprints when you were here before?"

"It was the footprints that led me on."

"I don't see your footprints here. All these marks are from sandaled feet," retorted Leighton.

The discovery did not attract attention. It seemed of slight significance to the others; but the savant continued his examination of the ground with redoubled interest. Raoul also showed astonishment at the fact pointed out to him; and at first offered no explanation. Obviously, a

footprint in a cave, not subject to effacement by wind or weather, should remain indefinitely, unless destroyed by man or animal. But, curiously enough, the sandal prints were not sufficiently numerous to stamp out all vestige of the prints that must have been made by Raoul in his coming and going through the tunnel—if Raoul had really ever been in this tunnel. So Leighton argued, and the conclusion that Raoul had not been there at all seemed logical. Had he deliberately deceived them—a supposition for which there appeared no motive—or was he himself mistaken in the course he had pursued in his exploration some years ago?

"Well, there it is," laughed Raoul. "Your reasoning is sound. My footprints ought to be here, but they aren't. I can't explain it."

"It is not worth while," exclaimed Miranda impatiently, adding not over lucidly, "they take them away."

"Perhaps Mr. Arthur wore sandals," suggested Andrew, illuminated by a brilliant idea.

"Whatever happened, Uncle Harold," said Una, who had ventured into the tunnel some distance ahead of the others, "what difference does it make now? We are losing time from our search—from your picnic, Mrs. Quayle!"

"Picnic!" she shuddered. "How can we picnic with dead walls and mysterious footprints all around us?"

"Good!" exclaimed Miranda in response to Una's appeal. "The womens always are captains—the mens must follow!"

There being no objection to this way of putting it, Leighton and Raoul gave up the puzzle of the footprints and set out seriously to explore the tunnel.

They soon found, as Raoul said, that traveling here had its difficulties. Huge boulders that took some little dexterity and sureness of foot to get over obstructed the narrow passage. For Una, who showed surprising agility, such impediments were not disconcerting; but Mrs. Quayle found them not at all to her liking. Progress with that bewildered lady was necessarily slow and, in some unusually rough places, had to be made by a system of shoving from behind and hauling from above that kept her in a state of breathless agitation. This was increased by imaginary terrors, chief among which was the constant dread of meeting the apparition described by Andrew, whose story had made a deep impression on her mind.

As a matter of fact Andrew's man in the toga was not in evidence, except as the occasional imprint of a sandal on the floor of the cave suggested him. But the explorers were too busy surmounting the obstacles with which the tunnel was strewn to heed details that otherwise might have arrested their attention. The sharp edges of the rocky wall played havoc with their clothing, drawing from Miranda, incensed at his own rotundity, a choice series of expletives—fortunately in Spanish—and arousing the wrath even of Mrs. Quayle. After the first five hundred yards, however, the passage widened sufficiently for them to look about and take account of the perils—if there were any—facing them.

The endless vista of rock, hewn in every conceivable shape and lighted dimly by the rays from their lamps, was dispiriting, to say the least. With the passing of the tunnel, however, and its alarming sense of premature entombment, even Mrs. Quayle experienced a faint return

of confidence, while the schoolmaster, her companion in misery, began to feel a mild curiosity in the outcome of an adventure for the undertaking of which he had been the unwilling cause. He wondered vaguely to what further depths of this hole in the mountain the more enterprising spirits of the party would lead them.

"I am sure I never came as far as this," he protested.

"Well, what of that?" demanded Leighton.

"He say he never come here!" crowed Miranda. "Very well, my leetle fellow, you are here now."

"Yes, but—how far will we go?" he persisted.

"You remember nothing of this?" asked Raoul.

"I—I rather think I stopped in the beginning of the tunnel."

"But here are the footprints," said Una eagerly.

"They are made by sandals. I never wear sandals," said Andrew sadly.

"Of course. They make by the other fellow."

"By that man who wears a toga?" asked Mrs. Quayle anxiously. "It would be awful to meet him in this place."

"She is afraid, this old lady—she have nerves!" announced Miranda. "She better go back."

There being sound sense in the observation, the others stopped to consider it.

"I could never find my way alone through that tunnel," declared Mrs. Quayle.

As this was quite obvious, something had to be done. No one wished to desert the unfortunate lady; at the same time all, with the exception of Andrew, were anxious to press on without delay. Miranda, in terse Spanish, explained the difficulty to General Herran, who



shrugged his shoulders disgustedly, expressing emphatic disapproval of women as explorers.

"We must do something before we go any further," said Raoul. "There may be a long journey ahead of us."

"Do you expect it?" asked Leighton.

"I have no idea where we are."

"That means——"

"We have passed the dead wall."

"Merciful heavens!" exclaimed Mrs. Quayle, "we are lost!"

"Hardly that," said Una reassuringly. "It will be easy to go back the way we came. But this cave is too delightful to leave. I never breathed such air."

There was ample warrant for Una's enthusiasm. From the stifling atmosphere of the tunnel the explorers had entered a great rock chamber that widened as they advanced, opening up vistas of majestic spaciousness that contrasted strangely with the straitened path they had first followed. Overhead the outlines of a vast arching roof could be dimly made out by the flickering light from the lamps. At either side the dusky walls, with their flanking pinnacles and fantastic gargoyles, suggested the ornate escarpment of some Gothic cathedral. More noticeable even than these architectural features, was the delightful atmosphere, mild, fragrant, invigorating, pervading the great silent spaces. Usually the air in the famous caves familiar to tourists, although pure enough, is chilly and damp, so much so that the explorer is forced to exercise in order to keep warm. Here, on the contrary, one enjoyed the temperature of a perfect day in early summer—a fact that had called forth Una's

praise, and was silently noted by Harold Leighton as one of the novel features of the Guatavita cave.

"Of course we must go on," Leighton decided impatiently. "If Mrs. Quayle is nervous, she had better wait for us outside."

"Perhaps I will be only in the way here," said that lady contritely. "But what will you do without me, Una?"

"I will take her," interposed Miranda in a chivalric outburst. "Come!" he added, turning unceremoniously to retrace his steps to the opening of the tunnel, a point that could not be far away, although not near enough to be revealed by the light thrown from their lamps.

In spite of the extended area of the subterranean chamber in which they were standing, it was easy to return to the tunnel by simply retracing the path they were on. This path was marked by a depression in the uneven rocky floor across which it was laid. It was fairly smooth and overspread by a fine sand that bore the impress of many sandaled feet. There was no danger of losing one's way, and the energetic doctor, hurried along so as to spend the least possible time on his self-appointed mission. He did not notice that the terrified Mrs. Quayle, convinced that his invitation concealed a plot to rob her of her jewels, failed to accompany him. The others, amused at his abrupt departure, patiently awaited his return, watching the speck of light made by his lamp bobbing about in the distance. Presently the light disappeared, and they concluded that Miranda had entered the tunnel. But in this they were mistaken. In a few minutes they were startled by an explosive "Caramba!" followed shortly by the apparition of the doctor

running towards them, breathless from his exertions, and exploding with mingled wrath and consternation.

"It has gone—lost! I cannot find him!" he shouted in an incoherent torrent of Spanish and English.

"What has gone?" demanded Leighton.

"We are lost! We are lost! The tunnel has gone!"

"Nonsense!"

"It is true! I go there. I not lie. I find the tunnel where we come—and it has gone!"

"Impossible! What did you find?"

"I not find it. It is true! I find there what this fellow say," he replied, turning savagely on Raoul. "It is—what you call?—one dead wall!"

## XIII

### MRS. QUAYLE TAKES THE LEAD

MIRANDA was not dreaming—the tunnel had vanished. That may be a strong word for it; but anyway, whatever had happened, the tunnel was not to be found.

Returning by the path upon which they had entered the subterranean chamber, they were confronted by a wall of rock where the entrance to the tunnel should have been. They were perfectly certain that when they passed out of the tunnel, less than half an hour before, into the main body of the cave, this wall had not been there. Where it had come from, why they had not seen it before, were posers too puzzling to waste time over. No one had seen it, of that they were certain; and they couldn't have helped seeing it if it had been there. Hence they were forced to the astonishing conclusion that this wall had moved into its present position during the last half hour through some invisible, superhuman agency. The whole thing, in fact, was incomprehensible, ridiculous, absurd. But there it was, for all that—and it had its depressing consequences.

"You know that crocodile on the river," said Miranda impressively; "he open the mouth—the bird walk in.

He shut the mouth—the bird is in one trap. So it is to us.”

Terrified by this picture of what had happened, Mrs. Quayle involuntarily clutched the jewels encircling her neck as if to protect them from some invisible brigand. The schoolmaster, also, seemed to suffer additional discomfort. Miranda's way of putting it, however, failed to satisfy the others. Leighton stoutly refused to believe in magic. Herran, in voluble Spanish, insisted that magic alone could explain the affair. Miranda repeated his alligator theory.

“This cave is alive,” he added. “You see the mark of the feet?”

“Where is Mr. Arthur?” suddenly asked Una.

They had been so absorbed in the mystery of the vanishing tunnel that the absence of one of their number had not been noticed. Una's startled query brought them face to face with another puzzle, as baffling and uncanny, in a way, as the wall of rock that had come from nowhere and planted itself between them and the entrance to the cave. Raoul had disappeared; search as they might, call as loudly as they could, no trace of him was to be found. Had he deliberately deserted them, or had he suddenly been spirited away by the same invisible agency that had prevented their leaving the cave? The more credulous of the party believed he had been spirited away.

“But it is impossible,” insisted Miranda angrily. “I see him now—and now he is not here. The canaille!”

“There is only one thing to be done,” declared Leighton emphatically. “We can't get out of here; we must go on.”



"Yes! Yes!" exclaimed Una.

"Carambal What for we go on?" remonstrated Miranda. "We are lost, we starve, if we leave this place."

"You mean, we are lost if we stay here," reasoned Leighton. "There is nothing to be gained by staring at this rock. The fact that Arthur has disappeared, that the entrance to the tunnel has been closed, that there are fresh footprints besides our own all about us, proves that this cave is inhabited. Whoever they are, we must find these people."

Leighton's way of putting things was effective. It at least prevented a panic. Even Miranda admitted the necessity of the course proposed by the savant, and as Herran had nothing else to offer in its place, it was decided to press on with the exploration of the cave without delay.

Fortunately, they had a fair amount of provisions and enough oil to keep their lamps going for several days. Before starting on their expedition—when it promised to be nothing more than a "picnic"—this supply of food and fuel seemed far beyond any possible need. Now, thanks to the fussiness of Mrs. Quayle, who had insisted on these abundant preparations, there was no immediate danger of starvation. Each carried his or her portion of food in a light, capacious sack. These sacks, woven by the natives from vegetable fiber, swung easily from the shoulders. The oil for the lamps was in two cans, one of which Andrew carried, Raoul the other. Whatever had become of Raoul, his can of oil had not disappeared with him. It was found near the spot in the large cave where Miranda had turned back to take Mrs. Quayle.

to the tunnel. Here, then, Raoul had left them. Hoping for a clew, they examined the ground for his footprints, but could discover nothing. The path beyond showed the impress of sandaled feet only—and Raoul, they agreed, did not wear sandals. Either he had left the path and chosen the rocky floor of the cavern in its stead—in which case it would be impossible to discover his trail—or he had followed them to the tunnel and gone off on one of the side tracks that they had noticed and partially explored there. Why he should have done either of these things was quite beyond them to answer. At any rate, they tried every means to find him, and their failure left them more despondent than ever. All except Leighton and Una.

Failure did not daunt Leighton. He was convinced that by persevering in their exploration they would solve the mystery of the cave, gain tidings of David, and run down Raoul. Una shared his optimistic view, and both chafed at the reluctance of their companions to go ahead with the energy their plight demanded. The fact is, the feeling that they were caught in a cavern of unknown extent, connected with certain mysterious happenings in the immediate past, mixed up in the legendary history of a vanished race, and inhabited even now by strange beings in outlandish costumes, had a blighting effect upon them. Mrs. Quayle refused to be comforted and, as it was out of the question to go on without her, Leighton, like an astute general, proposed having lunch before doing anything else. Every one brightened up at the idea; it was one of those master-strokes of policy that, when all else fails, saves the day. Miranda declared emphatically that food was “good

for the estomach," and, as no one thought otherwise, they fell to with an appetite sharpened by their exertions and made fairly razor-like—although this they did not realize—by the bracing atmosphere of the cave.

There were bollos of corn and yucca—yellow, white, brown—variously flavored, soggy, solid. This was a concentrated food that just hit the need of a party of marooned picknickers. And there were large flat disks of cassava, a native bread that Mrs. Quayle declared, with some reason, resembled chips of wood, more than anything else, in taste and toughness. This, too, furnished the maximum of nourishment in a small space. These foods, with such fruits as the almond-like sapoti, the juicy nispera, the delicate chirimoyo, furnished a meal that aroused Miranda's enthusiasm, although to the untrained New England palate it was not quite so satisfying as it might be. The thought, too, that after this supply of food was exhausted, there would be nothing to eat, and no way of getting anything to eat, spoiled just that part of the picnic that should be most enjoyable. And then, worse than all, unthought of until now, there was the appalling problem of—water. In the lunch bags of Doctor Miranda and General Herran there were two small bottles of red wine; but when this was offered to Mrs. Quayle that unhappy lady's thirst for water reached an acute stage. She declared that all wine was poison, and that she would die if she couldn't get a drink of water. Even Leighton was disturbed. Water they must have, but—did it exist in a cave that was, apparently, caused by fire and not—as all respectable caves are—by water?

"Guatavita!" exclaimed Miranda, smacking his lips after a deep draught of claret.

"Guatavita!" echoed Leighton irritably. "Why not say the river Magdalena? How are we to reach Guatavita?"

"It is near," was the complacent reply. "It come into the cave."

"How do you know that?"

"Always there is water in the cave. And here—there is the lake outside."

"Yes, outside," said Leighton bitterly.

"But first it is inside."

Miranda's confident assertion was worth considering. That there might be—that there probably was—some subterranean connection between the cave and the lake—even if the former did come from fire—was a plausible theory. As he went over the matter in his own mind, Leighton's respect for Miranda's common sense jumped from zero to a comparatively high figure. But he was not convinced.

"You forget; we are above the level of the lake," he argued.

"That is true," agreed the doctor, who, in the meantime, bottle in hand, had been nervously walking about, peering into the darkness that surrounded them. "Yes, that is true. We come in over there; and always we walk up, up. The lake is always below. This path it never go down. But here—aha! Caramba!—is one other path—and it go down."

Miranda's voice shrilled with excitement. He was elated with the importance of his discovery. And it was important. The spot they had chosen for their

lunch was the furthest point they had reached in their explorations, the point where Miranda had turned back to take Mrs. Quayle out of the cave and where they had last seen Raoul Arthur. It was marked by a huge pyramidal rock rising from the floor of the cave. Along one side of this rock the path they had followed went on indefinitely, in a gradual upward incline. It was to the other side that Miranda eagerly called attention. Placing his bottle of claret down on the rock beside him, he got on his knees and, with his nose almost touching the ground, made a minute study of the floor of the cave.

Even Andrew felt the contagion of the doctor's excitement. Fruits, bollos, cassavas were abandoned pell mell as one and all scrambled to their feet eager to find out what new puzzle Miranda had managed to pick up. The light from their lamps cast huge, uncertain shadows on the irregular masses of rock that everywhere blocked the view. At first there was nothing to be seen that differed essentially from what they had grown accustomed to in this subterranean world. There was the same chaos of jagged pinnacles and boulders, the same display of irresistible energy that had been let loose and played itself out here ages ago. But in the midst of it all, zigzagging through this maze of dusty forms, there was the new path announced by Miranda. It led away from the central rock, or pillar, where they had taken their lunch, and formed an acute angle with the path they had already traversed. It was not so plainly marked as the latter, and appeared little more than a rift among the rocks that strewed the floor of the cave. But it was a path, there was no mistaking that. Among



the evidences that it had been recently used was one that particularly delighted Miranda and justified his prolonged microscopic examination of the path itself—the footprints of a man wearing, not sandals, but shoes.

“Raoul Arthur!” exclaimed Leighton.

“Perhaps,” agreed Miranda.

“Where could he have gone?” asked Una. “This path runs in nearly the same direction as the one we followed.”

“We will see.”

As a matter of fact, the two paths, starting together at the central rock and going thence in the same general direction, gradually diverged from each other, much as do the two lines that form the letter V. Then, another difference was noticeable. The first path followed a comparatively uniform level; the second dipped steadily downward. This peculiarity, first noted by Miranda, appealed particularly to Herran. Gloom had been the dominant mood with the general ever since he had entered the cave. He had made mental notes of things as they had happened, but he had not shared in the discussions of the others. This was partly due to his ignorance of English, partly to a sense of responsibility that he felt as a citizen of Bogota whose duty it was to guide a party of foreigners safely through one of the difficult regions of his native land. But now, at last, he had something to say, something that was due from him as their leader. Tugging at his beard in characteristic fashion, he gave the result of his observations in terse Spanish.

“At first we go away from the lake. Then we come

back to it, just a little. Then we go away. Now this path take us right there again."

"That is it," agreed Miranda.

It sounded rather mixed up, and no one paid much attention to it. But at least it put General Herran in a better humor.

"Perhaps this will take us out of the cave," suggested Andrew. "The path is nearly in the right direction."

"I hope it means water, anyway," said Una, thinking of Mrs. Quayle.

They gathered up what was left of their provisions and set off again, single file, down the new path, General Herran in the lead, Andrew bringing up the rear. They had not gone many yards before they noticed the marked difference in the two paths. At first the change in level was scarcely perceptible; but now the descent became more and more abrupt, and as there was less sand and gravel for a foothold, they found the smooth surface of the rocks, tilted often at a sharp angle, anything but easy going. Another peculiarity that soon caught their attention was the lessening height of the cave's roof. Until now this roof had been so far above them that they had to throw their heads way back to see it, and even then it appeared in only vague outlines. Now it took a downward curve that brought it nearer and nearer to them. Following the same descending sweep it was evident that floor and roof would shortly come together and the confines, at least of that portion of the cave, would be reached.

Along with this new architectural feature in the structure of the cave, there was a noticeable change in

the character of the rock forming it. Walls and floor had, until now, been sharp and jagged in contour, dull, almost black, in color. But the unevenness of surface was disappearing. The rocks were smoother, as if worn and rounded by constant rubbing. Vivid colors gleamed from wall and column with a pristine freshness suggesting that this part of the cave belonged to a far more distant period than the great rock chamber in which they had stopped to take their luncheon. Finally, they were surrounded at every hand by those spear-like formations, thrust upwards from the floor or depending from the roof, that give to the interiors of most caves their fantastic appearance—the stalactites and stalagmites about whose origin in the workshop of Nature there can be no doubt.

This change had an invigorating effect upon the explorers. Passing from the unrelieved gloom of the first cavern into this fairy-built grotto, with its bright hues and pleasing shapes, they began to forget their fears and felt instead something like the real enjoyment that belongs to unexpected adventure. Everything in the way of glorious surprise seemed possible. For one thing, Miranda's confident prediction was apparently about to be realized, a probability that the doctor celebrated by alternate chuckles and grunts of satisfaction.

"If we don't find water, there is at least no doubt that water has once been here," declared Leighton. "These stalactites make that certain."

"You will see—you will see," persisted Miranda. "It is the Lake Guatavita."

"How can that be?" argued Leighton. "No opening of the lake into this cave has ever been discovered."

"You will see."

One might almost imagine that the intricacies of the cave were as familiar to the doctor as the formula for his celebrated pills. But his confident attitude was only one part genuine to three parts bravado. He enjoyed opposing a scientist showing such supreme self-possession as Leighton, and he delighted in startling statements of fact that merely bewildered his hearers. But he was by no means sure in his own mind of the truth, or even the probability of the theory he was advancing. General Herran, however, who had heard as far back as he could remember the strange tales of mystery regarding Lake Guatavita, and had often speculated with other Bogotanos on the disappearance beneath its waters of the fabulous wealth of the ancient Chibchas, was keenly alive to the possibilities lying before them now that they were on the very spot haunted by so many fascinating traditions of his race. Like most natives of Bogota the Spanish blood in his veins was mixed with the blood of the Chibchas—and it was an infusion he was proud to own. Hence, he readily believed that at any moment they would stumble upon a perfect mountain of treasure, all the lost gold and emeralds that Spanish romancers had dreamed about and travelers of the old heroic times had risked their lives for.

They had now reached the end of the precipitous incline down which the path had led them, thankful to exchange the slipping and sliding, to which the tilted rocks had treated them, for the firm footing offered by a comparatively level floor. Here the roof hung only a few feet above their heads, whence it curved down-

ward, glistening with the delicate fretwork that the subterranean torrents of bygone ages had carved upon it, until it became a part of the rock-strewn ground beneath. The chamber thus formed became a long, spacious corridor, one side of which was open to the vast amphitheater they had just left, the other side stoutly hemmed in by a maze of stalactites and stalagmites looming up as sentinels in front of a wall that could be dimly seen behind them. Down the middle of this corridor lay the path they had been following, wider now and showing the imprint of many sandaled feet. Before them, at the end of the corridor, they could distinguish the outlines of another wall, apparently marking the limit of this portion of the cave.

"There is your lake," said Leighton ironically to Miranda, who shrugged his shoulders in reply.

"At any rate, Uncle Harold," said Una reproachfully, "there must be an opening here. And the air is just heavenly! Instead of walking, one could dance."

The others appeared to feel the truth of Una's observation, for they moved along with a briskness, a snap, they had not shown before. This was particularly noticeable in Mrs. Quayle, who seemed to be propelled by some inner gayety of spirit that quite changed her usually sedate manner and appearance. The transformation was not lost on Una, who was both amused and puzzled by it.

"Look at Mrs. Quayle's jewelry!" she exclaimed. "It is dancing about as if it were moved by a breeze from somewhere."

"What do you mean? I can't feel any breeze," declared Leighton. "The singular fluttering of Mrs.



Quayle's jewelry simply means, I suppose, that the wearer is, as usual, agitated."

That Mrs. Quayle was agitated, and not in the joyous frame of mind that Una at first supposed, began to be painfully evident. Ever since she had come into the cave agitation had been a chronic condition with her. But in this instance it hardly explained the eccentric activity that had suddenly developed among the ancient heirlooms that she guarded so jealously. The large gold pendants that dangled from her necklace beat an unaccountable tattoo upon her neck and shoulders, while the massive brooch fastened to her bodice showed an obstinate tendency to break away from its moorings. Even the gold rings on her fingers seemed possessed with a rebellious spirit, a mischievous desire to dance in unison with brooch and necklace, while two heavy bracelets, made of links and chains, clicked and snapped like castanets under the prevailing terpsichorean influence.

For several minutes before Una drew attention to these strange antics Mrs. Quayle had been unhappily aware of the insurrection that had broken out among her treasures and had clutched frantically at them in an unavailing attempt to quiet their ill-timed frenzy. She dabbed at them with one hand and caressed them with the other, only to find that as soon as they were freed from her restraining touch they flapped and jingled and tugged at her with renewed energy. Finally, with the eyes of all the party upon her, the terrified lady gave up in despair.

"I don't know what is the matter with them," she wailed; "they never acted this way before. I am not agitated," she added irritably, "as Mr. Leighton says.

And I don't think it is a breeze either. It takes more than a breeze to make bracelets and brooches dance. They are just possessed, and for no reason at all. Oh, why did I wear these precious things on this terrible journey!"

Doctor Miranda, with the steadfast gaze of an exorcist, planting himself firmly in front of her, his arms crossed on his chest Bonaparte-fashion, added to Mrs. Quayle's dismay.

"I think she have the malaria," he announced solemnly. "I give her my pills——"

"I won't take your old pills," was the spirited reply. "They nearly did for poor Mr. Andrew. I think they may kill him yet. There is nothing the matter with me. I want to get out of this cave—and I'm going to this very minute."

Never in the annals of her long career as housekeeper and self-effacing lady's companion had Mrs. Quayle been known to give way to such open defiance of any one belonging to the opposite sex. And, as if to show that she meant every word she said, she brushed past the astonished doctor and strode ahead of the others along the path leading down the corridor. To no one was her behavior more astonishing than to Leighton, in whom the reserve of the scientist was sorely strained by this sudden show of daring from a creature whose timidity was proverbial. As leader of the expedition, and obeying also the skeptical bent of his nature, the savant felt that his own dignity was involved.

"Mrs. Quayle is perfectly right," he announced coolly; "we must lose no more time in these trifles. What if her jewelry does show a disposition to dance? A woman's

jewelry is always ridiculous—and Mrs. Quayle's has always been a puzzle besides."

But the rest of the party soon found that Mrs. Quayle was not an easy leader to follow. Where before she kept them back by her ineffectual efforts to get over the various obstacles encountered in their explorations, and had needed their help at almost every step, she now set them a pace that atoned for her former lagging. Whether this amazing activity was due to a sudden attack of fever, as Doctor Miranda maintained, or whether it came from a frantic desire to escape from a region that filled her with superstitious terrors, Mrs. Quayle showed no sign of giving up what she proposed to do, whatever that might be. On the contrary, as the far end of the corridor grew more distinct she sped along faster than ever. Her rebellious jewelry fluttered and twitched and danced more vigorously, until it fairly stood out before her, straining and pulling her along, breathless and hysterical, as if drawn by some irresistible force.

"I can't stop it! I can't stop it!" she gasped.

To which Miranda, puffing along in her wake, replied with dramatic emphasis: "This little woman must be stop!"

But this was not easy, even for a doctor with unlimited experience in quinine. The smooth, tapering surfaces of the stalactites, standing on guard in long rows down one side of the corridor, glinted derisively as the explorers rushed past them frantically trying to curb the frenzy that had seized this perfectly harmless woman who was now leading them on to a goal that might have all kinds of disaster in store for them. As they drew

nearer the end of the corridor, the expected opening that was to deliver them from their subterranean prison was not visible, at least to the hasty glance that could be spared from the absorbing pursuit of Mrs. Quayle. Nevertheless, the awkward rapidity with which they were hurrying on to their fate was to be rewarded, apparently, by the discovery of something that was different, at any rate, from the wilderness of rocks that hitherto had baffled them in this gloomy underworld—and it was not General Herran's mountain of gold and emeralds, either.

Something made by man, and not by nature, was here. This was unmistakably revealed in an odd sort of structure towards which they were hurrying. At last they were confronted, they believed, by the clew to the mysterious beings who inhabited the place, whose presence had been indicated by the footprints, by the man in the toga, seen, or imagined, by Andrew, and vaguely suggested by the weird disappearance of the entrance to the tunnel through which they had hoped to make their escape. Here all these things that had filled them with alternate anxiety and curiosity were to be explained. Unfortunately, Mrs. Quayle's impatience to get on gave them no opportunity to reconnoitre, at a safe distance, the object they were approaching. Leighton especially, accustomed to the careful methods of science, would have preferred a more deliberate and cautious mode of travel to the brainless hurry into which his housekeeper had plunged them. As it was, the object looming before them, so far as they could snatch time to make it out, resembled a huge stone windlass. Even the cylindrical drum and the long curved handle hanging at the side of one of the tall uprights were of stone. Certainly, a

windlass like this—if it was a windlass—had never been seen before. It could not be the work of modern times—it was much too clumsy for that. And of stone! Perhaps it belonged to the Stone Age. It was conceivable—and the notion stirred the depths of the savant's soul with delight—that here, in this subterranean chamber of the Andes, they were about to stumble upon an archaeological find that would revolutionize the current theories as to primitive man and his development. But—was it a windlass? The two uprights carrying the long horizontal drum at the top, instead of in the middle, were some ten or fifteen feet high. With such an abnormal height, and such singular construction, the **THING** might be intended to serve as a gallows quite as reasonably as a windlass. Whoever would have believed that they had the gallows in the Stone Age! There, sure enough, was the rope dangling most suggestively from the crosspiece—or drum, whichever it might be. But then, a rope was the conventional adornment, whether for gallows or windlass. As they came within fifty yards of it, the **THING** looked unquestionably more and more like a gallows, less like a windlass. It stood within ten feet of the wall, through a long, wide aperture in which one end of the rope disappeared. The other end, attached to what appeared to be a great oblong stone, lay coiled upon the ground.

Not until she had almost reached it did Mrs. Quayle realize the oddity of the structure towards which she had been racing. Then its resemblance to a gallows suddenly flashed upon her. With a gurgle of horror she threw herself upon the ground, unable, apparently, so long as she remained upon her feet, to contend against



the invisible influence that forced her to run fairly into the arms of this terrifying object. Prostrate between two rocks lying across the path, her wild flight came to an end. Here her companions gathered around her—Miranda, puffing and panting from his exertions, determined to allay the violent attack of fever that he still believed was the cause of the lady's unaccountable paroxysms; Leighton, torn between the psychological interest of the case and the archæological puzzle awaiting solution; Andrew, his huge hands waving about in helpless dismay, muttering incoherent advice to any one who would listen, and Una, anxious to soothe an agitation that, she conceived, was due merely to a case of nerves.

"She will be all right—soon she will be all right," declared Miranda, intent on his professional duties as he knelt on the ground beside Mrs. Quayle. With which comforting assurance he seized one of her hands, and with his other hand tried to force open her mouth.

"I am all right," she shrieked, tearing herself out of his clutches. "There's nothing the matter with me. Something is pulling me to that terrible thing over there. It seems to be my jewelry. My necklace is cutting my head off. This brooch!—oh! it's awful! What shall I do? What is the matter?"

"It is very simple," declared Leighton sternly. "Take off your jewelry if it bothers you. I don't see why you should be wearing it, anyway."

Mrs. Quayle clutched wildly at her necklace and brooch, loath to part with them and evidently regarding the people gathered around her as little better than a lot of brigands who had lured her here to rob her of her

treasures. Every one else heartily agreed with Leighton's proposal.

"Caramba! That is true!" shouted Miranda delightedly. "This necklace, it choke her too much. I take him off of her."

Before Mrs. Quayle could protest further, Miranda seized her by the throat, hauling at the massive necklace in an effort to find the clasp that held it in place. The task proved difficult and promised to develop features that savored more of surgery than anything else. The trouble was not so much from the defensive tactics employed by Mrs. Quayle—who contrived to elude Miranda's grasp with surprising agility—as it was with the necklace itself. Never was a simple piece of jewelry more rebellious. It slipped through the doctor's fingers and jumped about and tugged at its victim's neck in the most baffling and erratic manner. But Miranda, growing more eager and determined, triumphed at last. Holding the snakelike coil in both hands as in an iron vise, he tore the chain apart with a masterly jerk.

And then an odd thing happened. Bounding to his feet, elated with his success, and holding the necklace towards his companions as if it were a hard-won trophy, Miranda suddenly spun around like a top, his arms shot straight out in front of him, and in this posture, before any one knew what he was about, he fairly raced towards the ominous apparatus at the end of the corridor and hurled himself on the oblong stone beneath it.

## XIV

### THE BLACK MAGNET

FOR once Doctor Miranda had nothing to say. To the eager queries of those about him he returned a grimace and a scowl of rage. Then he asked savagely for Mrs. Quayle.

"There is her neckalace," he said indignantly, letting go his hold on that extraordinary piece of jewelry and scrambling to his feet with as much dignity as was left to him.

"Will you tell me what all this means?" demanded Leighton sternly.

"How I know?" retorted Miranda, glaring venomously at him. "I pull the neckalace from the neck, and it fly from me. When I follow, it fly more fast—and it get stronger and it fly harder every time until it touch the rock. Then it stop and not come loose."

Sure enough, on the greenish-black rock over which they were bending, the necklace was spread out to its full length. With a quick jerk, Leighton dislodged one of the ends from its resting place. Letting it go, it returned to its original position with the sharp snap of a steel spring.

"A magnet! The most amazing magnet ever heard of!" exclaimed Leighton.

"A magnet that pull gold!" scoffed Miranda. "That is the foolishness!"

But Leighton was right. Each time the necklace was pulled away it was drawn back to the rock by a strong, invisible force. Repeated trials brought the same result. Leighton's curiosity was excited as it had never been before; but his most careful examination of the strange phenomenon failed to detect anything more than the fact that the substance exerting this unknown force was not stone but something more nearly akin to metal. It was neither so heavy nor so hard as iron. To the touch its surface faintly resembled the adhesive softness of velvet, although a blow from a stone, causing a clear, ringing sound, left not the slightest mark upon it. In the main, this block of metal—or whatever it might be called—was a deep black, tinged with a variegated shade of green that played over it according to the angle at which the ray from a light held above it was reflected. Dark lines of green followed the indentations traversing its surface. Cylindrical in shape, it weighed, according to Leighton's estimate, at least a ton. Imbedded in a deep groove around its center was a rope, measuring two inches in diameter, of pliable fiber, resembling the long lianas that festoon the trees of a tropical forest. This rope lay in a seamanlike coil on the ground, with the further end attached to the transverse beam of the scaffolding overhead.

"It is a magnet, nothing else," reiterated Leighton; "a magnet of a kind utterly unknown to science. All we can say is that this black metal has an affinity for gold—unless it turns out that Mrs. Quayle's jewelry is merely iron gilded over."

This doubt as to the genuineness of the housekeeper's treasures was promptly denied, however, by Una, who guaranteed their sterling quality.

"Let us test the rest of her jewelry," proposed Leighton.

To this further demand on her property Mrs. Quayle, wedged in between two rocks on the path where they had left her, too terrified to move, offered only a feeble protest. It mattered little to her, in her present condition, if her bracelets and brooch followed the necklace to their doom. One by one they were, accordingly, removed by Una, who, probably because she was less excitable than Miranda—and because, too, she had profited by his untoward experience in the same undertaking—was able to handle these pieces of jewelry without mishap. The force with which they were pulled towards the Black Magnet, however, and the tenacity with which they stuck to it, gave ample evidence that they answered to the same influence that still held the necklace.

"That is enough," said Leighton triumphantly. "The thing is proved. This is a gold magnet. If we lived in the Middle Ages we would call it the Philosopher's Stone. The theory that such a substance exists has attracted scientists who were more given to dreaming than practical observation. In this age we have neither looked for it nor believed in the possibility of its existence. And here it is!"

"What it make here?" demanded Miranda. "Tied by a rope to the machine—some one use it."

The inference, logical enough, certainly, increased Leighton's excitement. That the magnet was known and used by the inhabitants of the cave—if there were inhab-



itants—was evident. Under certain conditions a bar of metal that could attract gold with such force as that displayed by the Black Magnet would be of untold value. Here, where there were no evidences of mining operations, and attached to this primitive machine, it was difficult to explain what it was actually used for.

Leighton, more and more mystified, determined that the best way to solve the puzzle was to operate the machine in the manner indicated by its structure. It was not, as he pointed out—but as they in their first excitement imagined—a gallows. Instead, it was a winch, built in the most simple and archaic fashion; and as the Black Magnet was attached to it, the evident purpose was to hoist that huge body from the ground. Before testing this theory, Mrs. Quayle, who had recovered from her collapse sufficiently to join the others, insisted that her jewelry should be released from the magnet. Suspicious of the intentions of some of her companions, she was determined to regain possession of her treasures at once. But, as it was apparently impossible to wear her jewelry with comfort, or even safety, in the immediate vicinity of the Black Magnet, necklace, brooch and bracelets were removed to a distant corner of the corridor and there placed beneath a pile of stones. This done, the four men started to work the two long handles of the winch. At first these were turned with difficulty, the resistance proving, at least to Leighton's satisfaction, that the machine had not been used for a long time. Gradually, however, the coil of liana was transferred from the ground to the transverse beam overhead until it pulled taut with the magnet beneath.

Then came the real trial of strength. The magnet

wouldn't budge. Miranda puffed and grumbled over the task, declaring it impossible. The rest stopped and rubbed their arms ruefully. But Leighton was inexorable. Encouraging the others, and keeping them at it, by dint of increased exertion—to which Una brought additional assistance—the great Black Magnet was finally dragged from its moorings and held suspended just above the ground. It formed a perfect cylinder, about four feet long by a foot and a half in diameter, and must have weighed, they estimated, considerably over a ton—ten tons, vowed Miranda. On a winch of modern design this weight would not have been difficult to lift. But the hoisting apparatus they were using lacked the ordinary adjustments for counterbalancing such weights; hence, the muscular force needed proved no small matter.

“It take twenty men to lift this magnet,” growled Miranda.

“Twenty men could do it more easily than four men and a woman, undoubtedly,” replied Leighton. “But four can do it.”

And he was right. Inch by inch the magnet rose from the ground—for what ultimate purpose was not very clear, any more than that it was thought necessary by Leighton, in order to discover the use to which this strange bar of metal had been put, first to test the appliance obviously intended to bring it into action. It reached a height of one foot from the ground, then two, then three feet; then it stopped. There were groans and smothered imprecations, and it looked very much as if the huge bar of metal would come crashing down to the ground again. But the men, urged on by Leighton, did

not give in. And then—there was a grating noise, as if some hidden mechanism in the scaffolding had been set free. After which a strange thing happened. The transverse beam at the top of the windlass detached itself from one of the uprights supporting it and, using the other upright as a fulcrum, slowly swung to the wall of the cave, where it rested in a socket, bringing the magnet that was suspended from it, directly over a shelf-like projection beneath.

“Keep on! Keep on!” cried Leighton encouragingly. “Now we will see.”

Thoroughly aroused, the others redoubled their exertions. The magnet remained stationary for a few seconds, the liana supporting it tightening with every revolution of the drumhead at which the men were laboring. Then it slowly disappeared downward, the liana uncoiling itself, thus reversing the movement that before had carried it upward. There was a gradual increase in the momentum of its descent, followed by the splashing sound caused by the impact of a heavy body upon the surface of a pool of water; after which the liana was paid out until it reached its full length—when it suddenly slackened and came to a full stop.

“There, Mrs. Quayle, is your water,” announced Leighton.

“Water!” sneeringly echoed a voice from the darkness behind them. “Say, rather, there is the secret of Guatavita!”

“Raoul Arthur!” exclaimed the others.

Letting go the handle of the windlass, they rushed to the spot where the Black Magnet had vanished. There,

at one side of the rocky projection, stood Raoul, pale and haggard, the light in his lamp extinguished.

"I suspected this," he said, as if his sudden reappearance among them were the most natural thing in the world. "I knew from the direction of the path that it led back to the lake. I have been trying to reach this place for years. Oh, yes! I had heard something about it before—I don't deny that. But, of course, I expected to stay by you. So, when you started to leave the cave I came back, expecting to rejoin you. As I was examining the machine I was attacked by two men, thrown to the ground and left unconscious. I came to myself a few minutes ago—in time to congratulate you, it seems, upon solving the mystery of the cave."

"That is strange," said Leighton coldly. "You left us, without a word, at a time when you were needed. The attack that you say was made upon you we should have heard. But—we have heard nothing."

"Believe me, or not, as you like; it is true," was the sullen reply.

"Why do you say we have the secret of Guatavita?"

"Look!"

Raoul pointed to the projection in the wall behind which the Black Magnet had disappeared. It was not a shelf, as they had at first supposed, but the opening of a shaft, or well, that slanted downward at an angle that in the course of fifty feet, or less, would reach considerably beyond the vertical line of the cave's wall. In shape this shaft was oblong, slightly larger in length and in breadth than the Black Magnet. It was evidently of artificial origin, its four walls being perfectly smooth and without irregularities of line. Even by one who had

not seen the magnet descend into this shaft, its intended use as a sort of runway for raising and lowering heavy bodies would be quickly recognized. But where it led to was another matter. One thing was easily discovered: where it reached a point some twenty feet below the level of the cave's floor the shaft was filled with water. Beyond this, of course, nothing could be made out. It was to the bottom of the pool thus indicated that the magnet had plunged.

"It is a well hewn out of the rock by Indians—or perhaps by Spaniards digging for gold," said Leighton.

"I believe that we are the first white people who have ever stood in this place," said Raoul; then added, "unless David Meudon was here three years ago."

"But what is it about?" demanded Miranda impatiently. "What for is the magnet, and this well, and this machine?"

"Pull up the magnet and see for yourself," was the laconic reply.

"Caramba! That will be impossible," protested the doctor, not relishing the prospect of another turn at the machine.

"It is the logical thing to do," agreed Leighton.

The rest shared Miranda's aversion to another bout at the winch; but Leighton, backed by Raoul Arthur, finally persuaded them that their only hope of escape from the cave depended on keeping at this puzzle until they had solved it, and that the first step in this direction was to hoist the Black Magnet from its watery resting place at the bottom of the shaft. Reluctantly obeying the command, they again seized the long handle of the windlass. This time it was fortunate they had Raoul



to help them, since the resistance offered by the magnet, which now had to be hauled up an inclined plane by means of a rope nearly one hundred feet in length, was considerably greater than before. The windlass creaked and trembled as revolution after revolution of the drumhead slowly brought the great black bar of metal nearer to the surface. They could hear the far off swirl of the water as the ascending liana vibrated through it. Minutes that seemed to lengthen into hours passed without appreciable result. Then, at last, they heard the water rising as the magnet reached the mouth of the shaft. There was an additional strain on the liana, followed by the noise of a commotion in the subterranean pool as the liquid streams poured back from the emerging body.

But still the end to their work was not in sight. With every turn of the handle the weight of the body at which they were pulling seemed to increase. Mrs. Quayle, sole spectator of what was happening, watched the opening of the well with dismal apprehension, convinced that some dreadful transformation had taken place in its hidden depths. When the top of the magnet finally rose into view she shrieked hysterically. To her notion the great black body had an uncanny look; it had turned into a devil, for aught she knew, filled with evil designs against them. Anything that was supernaturally horrible, she believed, could happen in this cave—and there was enough in her recent experiences, indeed, to give some color to her belief.

But, devil or djinn, the water dripped and splashed in sparkling runlets from the shining body of the Black Magnet that had gained in luster since its submersion in the well. It seemed more alive than before, more capable

of exerting the mysterious force that had played such pranks with Mrs. Quayle's jewelry. As it cleared the top of the well the arm of the windlass to which it was hung, as if obeying some invisible signal, detached itself from the socket in the wall and slowly swung back into its original position between the two uprights of the machine. Here, as before, a reverse motion took place. The Black Magnet was poised for a moment in the air. It then descended to the ground, resting, finally, in the same spot where the explorers first discovered it.

A sigh of relief escaped them. Hoisting heavy weights was not much to their taste and they were glad the task was over. Then they rubbed their eyes, half expecting to see something miraculous, some sudden transformation as a result of their labors. But the Black Magnet, except for the brilliance due to its bath in the depths of the earth, looked exactly as it was before. This, it must be confessed, was disappointing to those who had been promised great rewards for toiling so patiently at the windlass. Raoul had declared the experiment would solve the secret of Guatavita. But they failed to see how a wet rock—or bar of metal, whichever it might be—with mud sticking to it, had any connection with a secret. Raoul, however, was not disconcerted. Getting to work on the magnet, he examined minutely every inch of its surface. At first he found nothing. Then, to the amazement of the others, he extracted from one of the large fissures in the magnet a thin disc encrusted with the microscopic growths that form on metals that are long subjected to the action of water. This disc proved its metallic nature by the force needed to release it from the magnet. Much of the brown matter sticking to it

was wiped away with a cloth, the more tenacious growth beneath was rubbed and scraped with a sharp stone. When the scouring was finished Raoul triumphantly held up the disc. It was a dazzling plate of gold, thin and flexible, rudely carved to resemble a human being. In size it was not more than the palm of one's hand, somewhat of that shape, a trifle longer and narrower, with a projection, intended to depict a man's head, face and neck, like a pyramid standing on its apex, upon which were traced in embossed lines three loops to represent the mouth and eyes, with another line running down the middle, long and straight, to represent the nose. The body of the figure was similarly carved—raised lines folded over the stomach for arms, with various loops and coils around the neck and chest, intended, doubtless, to indicate the ornaments and insignia of rank worn by the image or, rather, the human being or god for which it stood. All this was done in the finest gold tracery, which, if it lacked some of the subtleties of the goldsmith's art as we know it, was expressed, nevertheless, with admirable delicacy and firmness. In the head of the figure was a round hole showing, doubtless, that the disc was worn as a pendant by its owner, or was hung as a votive offering before his or her household deity.

Leighton had seen figures of like character and workmanship in Bogota, where they were exhibited as ornaments worn by the ancient Chibchas. Usually they were said to have been brought up by divers from the bottom of Lake Guatavita. Hence, there was little doubt as to the origin and antiquity of the disc presented to them by the Black Magnet. But how this disc came to be

at the bottom of a well in this vast subterranean labyrinth was not so easily answered. If this disc was the much talked of clew to the lost treasure of the Chibchas, and to all the other mysteries that seemed to crop up at every step the further they went into this cave, it was not an easy one to run down. And then, Miranda, who had insisted all along that by following the direction in which they had been going they were bound to reach the lake, blundered upon the answer to the whole question.

"It is Guatavita!" he said.

Of course, that was it! Herran and Leighton gasped for a moment as they took in the idea, and then they agreed that Miranda was right. Raoul smiled enigmatically as they discussed the problem in detail.

"Well, do you understand it now?" he asked. "Have you discovered Guatavita's secret? I wish I had known it three years ago!" he added bitterly.

"Ah! I see—I see!" shouted the doctor excitedly. "There is the well that come out at the bottom of the lake. Here is the magnet that go down there just when the people throw in all the gold. And then it come back here—and no one know except the king and his family. So, every year, they take all the gold of the country. Ah! they are very wise leetle fellows, those kings!"

"Then, if this is true," said Leighton meditatively; "if this well has its outlet at the bottom of the lake, and was made and used secretly to collect, by means of the Black Magnet, the treasure offered by the people in the Feast of El Dorado, to-day there is no gold left in Guatavita."

"If it were drained of all its waters," remarked Raoul,

"I believe that the emptied basin would be found to contain nothing more than a few stray gold ornaments—like the one you fished up just now—that failed to reach the Black Magnet when they were flung into the lake centuries ago."

"Your plans to empty the lake, then, are useless?"

"After what I have learned to-day, added to what I have long suspected, I should say—quite useless."

"But the fabulous amount of treasure those deluded people threw into the lake for centuries——?"

"Has all come up here, where we are standing now, caught by the Black Magnet?"

"He fish very well, this leetle stone," said Miranda, caressing it fondly. "He catch more, better fish than the whole world."

"Where is all that gold to-day?" demanded Leighton.

"Ah! Where!"

"Good heavens! What is that?"

While Leighton and Raoul were discussing the old problem of what became of the Chibcha Empire's far-famed treasure, the others had wandered away from the Black Magnet and were examining some of the strange objects in its immediate vicinity. The more familiar they became with this portion of the cave, the more signs they saw in it of human occupation. For one thing, the place was honeycombed with paths, most of them radiating from the shaft that sank to the bottom of Lake Guatavita. These paths led in different directions; but there was no way of telling whether any or all of them had been recently used. This question was of more immediate interest than the one connecting the cave with the fate of the ancient Chibchas. If this cave was



inhabited to-day—if it was the hiding place of a lawless gang of Bogotanos, for example—it was well for the explorers to be on their guard. Herran was particularly alive to this possibility, and he was quick to heed, therefore, Mrs. Quayle's terrified exclamation, which she repeated—

“Good heavens! What is that?”

It was at the head of one of the paths, running behind the close ranks of stalactites before which they had found their way from the large open cave beyond, that Mrs. Quayle stood, her eyes round with excitement, pointing vaguely at something in front of her. But the others could see nothing. Indeed, it was hard to tell whether she had really seen anything worth serious investigation, her chronic nervousness had such an uncomfortable habit of discovering specters—that did not exist—in every dark corner. Then, too, clusters of stalactites had a way of taking on odd, fantastic shapes that might easily seem to be alive even to the cool-headed. But this time there really was substance to Mrs. Quayle's fancies. She continued to point down the pathway of stalactites, crying repeatedly—

“What is that?”

“Well, what is it?” demanded Leighton.

“The man in the toga! The man in the toga!” she cried breathlessly.

The others crowded about her.

“It is nothing!” said Miranda incredulously.

“It is! It is!” whispered Una. “I just caught the flash of white drapery at the bend in that farthest corridor.”

Raoul laughed. "You are mistaken," he said. "Nothing is there now, that's certain."

They stood silently watching the dark green-and-white figures that stretched away in closely huddled ranks before them. But they could detect nothing that answered to Mrs. Quayle's description. There was nothing that moved, nothing human, in all that glittering array of grotesque forms. Then, there was a sharp, clinking sound, as if the brittle point of a stalactite had been broken off and had fallen to the ground.

"We are watched," said Leighton in a low voice. "Whoever they are, these people have some reason for following us—and keeping out of the way."

"Time to be on our guard," said Herran in Spanish to Miranda, who assented vehemently.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Raoul.

"Ah! You say that?" growled Miranda suspiciously. "This is one trap of yours, then!"

The accusation added to the general alarm. Raoul protested scornfully; but before he had time to clear himself he was covered by two huge revolvers, drawn simultaneously by Herran and Miranda.

"It is not so easy!" threatened Miranda, whose excited flourish of firearms endangered the others quite as much as it did Raoul.

"Thank heaven, we have guns!" murmured Andrew, who had produced a harmless looking pocket-knife which he brandished ineffectively.

"This sort of thing is very annoying," said Leighton, addressing Raoul, who began to show uneasiness. "There's no denying that your disappearance was suspicious. Then we find you here in a place that is evidently

known and frequented by others. Your explanation is unsatisfactory. Then, when the presence of these hitherto invisible people is quite certain, you try to divert our attention from them."

"You are talking nonsense," said Raoul disgustedly. "You intimate that I am in league with the inhabitants of this cave against you. That means, I must have lured you here deliberately to do you harm. Please remember that it was you who planned this expedition, and that I had not ventured in here so far before."

"Who knows! You seemed familiar enough with the secret of the Black Magnet."

"Take us out of here, my fellow, and we believe you are not one scamp," said Miranda brusquely.

"I am not bound to do anything of the kind, even if I could," retorted Raoul. "Look out for yourselves."

"So! that is good," commented Miranda. "We take the advice. Here we can do nothing. Into Guatavita we cannot jump through this well. Me—I am too fat!"

The bustling doctor's show of energy proved infectious. He and Herran unceremoniously pocketed their revolvers, leaving Raoul at liberty to do as he pleased, while they looked about for a way of escape.

Since he had become suspicious of Raoul, Leighton was inclined to trust the leadership of the two South Americans. The latter, convinced that there was no way out from this part of the cave, determined to go back to the central chamber, hoping to find there the entrance to the tunnel leading to the outside world. They hit on this plan because they feared an ambush on any of the labyrinthian trails leading off in other unexplored directions. The rest agreeing, they set out along the path

flanked by the grove of stalactites, traveling at a quicker pace but with greater caution than before. Miranda and Herran marched ahead with revolvers drawn, Andrew in the rear still holding his pocket-knife ready for action. They had been delayed on Mrs. Quayle's account, for that lady, in spite of her anxiety to get away, had refused to budge without her jewelry. But it was not easy to satisfy her demand. For, when the jewelry was taken from its hiding place beneath a rock, it still showed the same strong tendency to fly to the Black Magnet. This distressed Mrs. Quayle, who refused to touch the treasures that she was at the same time loath to part with. But a compromise was finally effected by tying all the jewelry securely around Andrew's waist. This arrangement appeased the owner—but it gave an uncomfortable backward pull to every step the school-master took, who thus resembled, in walking, a ship sailing against the wind. This inconvenience, however, steadily decreased as they came out of the disturbing region of the Black Magnet, until finally these ancient heirlooms of Mrs. Quayle's regained their natural composure.

But there were other things besides the Black Magnet to interrupt their progress. No sooner had they gotten well under way and were congratulating themselves on their escape from mishap so far, than they were startled by a wild and piercing strain of music, seeming to come from the grove of stalactites before which they were hurrying. Amazed by so singular an interruption, they stopped short and looked fearfully about them. A sound of scornful laughter blended with the music.

"Raoul!" muttered Leighton.

But there was nothing to be seen of the strange American whose mocking laughter they were sure, nevertheless, they had heard. Then the music grew louder and louder, as if the musicians were steadily approaching in their direction. The music itself was subtly different, in tone and pitch, from anything played in the outside world. The high notes evidently came from wind instruments, but of a unique quality and caliber. Mingling with these notes, and sustaining the bass, were the heavy beatings of drums of the kind still used, although deeper and mellower, by the native Indians in their festivals.

The melody produced—if it could be called a melody—was of an extraordinary character. Its effect, its charm—for it had unmistakable charm—was quite impossible to define. In some respects it resembled the monotonous chantings peculiar to most primitive races, occasionally, as was customary with the latter, rising and falling, whole octaves at a time, in a wailing key. In the main, it carried a sort of theme, emotional and inspiring, that was far too complex to be attributed to the uncultivated musical taste common to savagery. There was an exultant swing to the measure, a lilting cadence that betrayed a fine esthetic sense, a rich imagination coupled with the simplicity and freedom that has not felt the pressure, except very remotely, of our western civilization. Such music was good to listen to—and under ordinary circumstances the explorers would have been content to listen and nothing more. But curiosity, and some remnant of fear the lulling influence of the music had not dissipated, kept them on the alert. Their fate depended, they felt, on these musicians. They must find out who they were before it was too late to retreat.



And then—presently—through the clustering green and white stems of the stalactites, they caught sight of them.

They were over twenty in number, moving, as nearly as the unevenness of the ground would permit, in time to the choral march they were playing. At sight of them Mrs. Quayle didn't know whether to be pleased or terrified. For the music was such an enchanting, soothing sort of thing, and the players so mild, benignant of aspect, anything like fear seemed out of place. But, on the other hand, the strange instruments they carried, their outlandish dress, the whole effect of them, in a way, was distinctly unearthly, supernatural—and Mrs. Quayle drew the line at the supernatural. So, she ended by being simply amazed beyond measure—and her companions shared her feelings in lessening degree. Miranda and Herran, dumbfounded by the apparition, forgot to handle their revolvers in the warlike fashion they had intended with the first approach of a foe; Andrew gaped in an open-mouthed sort of dream, during which his pocket-knife came imminently near doing fatal execution upon himself, while Una and Leighton, forgetting their anxiety, were lost in admiration of the delicious music and of the spectacle before them.

One and all of this singular band of cavemen were clothed after the fashion described by Andrew. Each wore a loose white mantle, or toga, that draped the figure in voluminous folds, adding to the grace and freedom of movement with which they kept time to the music. Their feet were shod with sandals, their heads encircled with bands of white cloth from the flying ends of which hung ornaments of gold and emerald. The musical instruments upon which they played were long,

slender tubes, curving upward at the extremity, of a metal that glittered and sparkled like the purest gold.

Most singular of all was the light that each of these musicians carried. This light came from neither torch nor lantern, but radiated in sparks and flashes from oval disks worn, jewel-wise, on the breast. By what fuel these incandescent fires were fed was not apparent. They burned with a clear white brilliance, illuminating each flowing figure with startling vividness, and filling the beholder, ignorant of their nature, with wonder at their admirable adaptability to the needs of a subterranean world.

To Leighton these strange lights were much more mystifying than all the rest of the apparition—for as yet it was difficult to regard the approaching throng as being anything more real than an apparition that one expects to have vanish away almost as soon as it makes its appearance. But these musicians, weird and unearthly though they first seemed when seen at a distance, as they drew nearer, proved to be substantial, flesh-and-blood human beings right enough. Their dark skins and aquiline features gave evidence, for one thing, that they were of Indian origin and not inhabitants of the remote, invisible fairyland that they appeared to the fervid imaginations of some of Leighton's companions. Doubtless, argued the savant, they were a band of revelers—or bandits—from the city to whom the secrets of the cave were familiar. But where they had picked up such extraordinary means for the illumination of their merry-making was more than he could fathom. Lights? They were unlike any lights he had ever heard of. All that he could make of it was that these illuminated disks

belonged to the marvels of a hitherto unknown world of science, marvels among which he counted the Black Magnet and—possibly—that disappearing wall at the entrance to the cave.

As these people showed no sign of hostility, the explorers began to hope that through them they would win their way out of the cave. Certainly, they were worth cultivating with this end in view. Hence, Miranda and Herran looked stealthily at their revolvers and restored them as quickly as possible to their hip-pockets, while such a burst of confidence seized Mrs. Quayle that she prepared and was actually seen to exhibit one of her most ingratiating smiles for the benefit of the approaching Indians, at the same time expressing in a loud voice to Una her approval of their music.

This pleasant feeling, however, that they were about to regain their liberty did not last long. The Indians, although showing no unfriendliness, gave unmistakable evidence that they meant to control the movements of the explorers. Still playing on their trumpets and beating solemnly on their drums, they marched around them, bowing courteously enough, but intimating at the same time that they were acting upon a definite plan that could not be interfered with. Somewhat dashed by this singular behavior, which was the more difficult to meet just because it lacked outward menace, the explorers conferred hastily together, hoping to hit on a safe line of action. The men of the party, suspicious of the friendly attitude assumed by the Indians, favored immediate resistance. Their first flush of confidence in them was gone. Herran and Miranda, especially, were doubtful of the intentions of these strange people. From

whatever motive, it seemed to them that the latter had deliberately planned their capture, evidently carrying out in this the orders of some one in authority over them. That these orders might come from Raoul Arthur was their principal cause for alarm. The departure of the American miner, under every appearance of treachery, marked him out as one to be feared. He was not, it is true, among the Indians who were surrounding them in their glittering line of dancers, but his absence was not proof that he had nothing to do with this odd demonstration. But—how resist a party so superior to their own in number, one that had already gained an obvious advantage of position over them. Leighton was doubtful what to do; Andrew was helpless; Mrs. Quayle was temporarily lost in admiration of the picturesque circle of dancing figures, all regarding her with gratifying amiability. Una alone insisted that the friendliness of the Indians was genuine, and that their own safety depended on obeying them. As a compromise it was decided to talk to these people—to find out what they were after. For this diplomatic duty Miranda and Herran were chosen.

Although the energetic little doctor was certainly not gifted with an unusual amount of tact, he had at least the merit of directness, and lost no time in calling the attention of the dancers to his desire to come to an understanding with them.

“Do you talk Spanish?” he shouted brusquely in that language.

“Surely, Senor Doctor,” gravely replied a tall personage whose dignity of bearing and the fact that the border of his flowing toga was distinguished by a deco-

rative design in embroidered gold indicated his superiority in rank over his comrades. "Surely, some of us talk Spanish."

Having given this assurance, the speaker checked the music and dancing of the others and stood, with the air of one accustomed to ceremonious usage, waiting to hear further from Miranda.

"Yes, I am doctor, famous doctor," said the latter, bustling up to the speaker and looking him over as if he were about to claim him for medical purposes. "I cure thousands and thousands with my pills. But how you know I am doctor?"

The Indian smiled, inclining his head graciously before answering.

"Doctor Miranda is so famous every one knows him."

Ordinarily the vanity of Miranda was easily touched, but just now he was too suspicious to be beguiled by the compliment.

"Caramba!" he snorted; "and who are you?"

"I am Anitoo."

"That is not Spanish," said Miranda sharply.

"I am not Spanish," replied Anitoo stiffly. "I come from an ancient race that ruled here long before there were any Spaniards."

"Well, Senor Anitoo—you say it is Anitoo?—that may be. You are Indian—Chibcha Indian, perhaps—and not Spanish, not Colombian. But what do you make in this cave?"

Anitoo smiled broadly.

"This is the home of my people for many centuries," he said. "And now, suppose I ask you a question. What do you make in this cave?"



## XV

### AT THE SIGN OF THE CONDOR

THERE is no doubt about it; Miranda had much the worst of it in his tilt with Anitoo. The Indian's point blank question as to why the explorers were in the cave was not easily answered. The more Miranda thought it over the less able was he to discover—or at least explain—just that very thing: why he and his companions were there. To say they were looking in a cave on the Bogota plateau for a man who had disappeared many miles away on the Honda road sounded rather unreasonable, now that he looked at it from the standpoint of a stranger; while to recall the story of foul play that linked this place with David's disappearance years ago seemed, under the circumstances, dangerous even to the impetuous Miranda. So, he shrugged his shoulders and resorted to a more evasive reply than was his custom.

"We come for a picnic, and we want to get out—that is all."

Anitoo again smiled broadly, yet with the subtle suggestion of holding in reserve an unuttered fund of wisdom that comes so naturally with the people of his race.

"That is all?"

"We look for one friend who is lost. Then, we come

with another who has gone. He is one canaille! You have seen him?"

"Ah!" murmured Anitoo, half to himself. "What is his name? What is he like?"

"He is one Yankee. He is called Senor Don Raoul Arthur. He look—well, he look like this——" and Miranda gave an exaggerated example of Raoul's rolling and twitching eyes.

"So, he is here!" said Anitoo, startled, apparently, by the information and amused by the grotesque lesson in optics given by the doctor. Miranda, on the other hand, gathered that Anitoo disliked Raoul—and this pleased him immensely. But he could get nothing more from the Indian who, although still friendly, began to show signs of impatience, talking earnestly to his followers in a language unintelligible to Miranda and Herran.

On both sides there was evident uneasiness; and when Anitoo, in a tone that sounded disagreeably like a command, told the explorers that they could not continue their tour of the cave unattended by them, things seemed to come to a climax. Miranda expostulated, the others grumbled and talked of resistance. But Anitoo was inflexible, insisting, all the while, that there was nothing unfriendly in his attitude. He reminded them that they could not possibly find their way out of the cave without his guidance. Miranda jumped at this hint of a rescue, but was again unable to extract a definite promise from Anitoo.

"We will first show the Senores some of the wonders of the Guatavita kingdom," said the smiling Indian.

"We don't want to see any more," said Miranda emphatically. "We have seen enough."

"No! No!" continued Anitoo. "Whoever comes so far as this must see our queen before he goes away."

"A queen! A kingdom in a cave! But that is impossible!"

"I like his offer," interposed Leighton, who understood enough to catch the meaning of this strange proposal. "Anitoo seems honest. We have lost our way. If he has a queen and a kingdom to show us, they may be worth seeing. We can be no worse off, certainly, for seeing them."

"Once in the land of goblins and fairies," remarked Una, "queens and kingdoms are a matter of course."

"It is some idle mummary, I suppose," added Leighton; "we are too near civilization for anything else. All the same, these lanterns—or whatever you call them—that they carry, are worth knowing more about."

"What are they?"

"I would give a good deal to know."

"Well, Senor," said Anitoo impatiently, "you will come with us?"

Without waiting for Miranda, who seemed reluctant to place himself in the Indian's power more than he could help, Leighton bowed assent.

"And this Senor Arthur?" inquired Anitoo.

"He has gone," replied Miranda promptly. "He will not come again."

"Perhaps," said Anitoo vaguely.

At his signal the Indians lifted the curved trumpets to their lips, the drums were beaten and, to the same curious spirited music that had heralded their approach—half march, half dance—they moved off, the explorers in their midst, down the path flanked by the forest of

stalactites, to the great entrance chamber whence, after finishing their hasty meal, the "picknickers" had first started on their journey of discovery.

The friendly bearing of Anitoo and the other cavemen did not fail to impress the explorers favorably, dispelling whatever suspicions they might have had in the beginning, and giving them a taste of real enjoyment in their adventure. All had this feeling of security except Miranda and Herran. The two South Americans, however, were less easily moved. Instead of sharing Una's and Mrs. Quayle's admiration of the picturesque appearance of their guides, they grumbled something to the effect that it was a lot of meaningless foolery. This skeptical attitude grew to open disapproval when, having reached the central rock where they had taken their meal in the main cavern, the Indians, instead of proceeding toward the entrance to the tunnel that had been so mysteriously lost, kept on in the opposite direction. This meant that they were now to explore an entirely new, unknown region; and the possibilities that awaited them, with such uncommunicative guides, in the gloomy depths that stretched before them, stirred up something of a mutinous spirit in the two South Americans. But their protests were futile. Without halting his rhythmic march, Anitoo smiled courteously at their objections, merely repeating his intention of taking them to "the queen." As this was all he would say, they were compelled to make the best of the vague indication of the course they were following. The others continued to enjoy the oddity of the adventure. The enlivening strains of music, the gala costumes of the Indians—all seemed part of a curious carnival the purpose of which was unknown to them.

The novelty was kept up by the strange scenes through which they were passing; it reached its climax at the further wall of the great central chamber.

So far, the natural features of the cave had absorbed their attention; now they were confronted with a series of Titanic specimens of human architecture as amazing in design as they were unexpected. It is misleading, perhaps, to describe this architecture as the product of human genius, because in line, material, and general plan it followed closely the pattern and the workmanship of the cave itself. Man had here adopted the half finished designs of nature and completed them in a way that carried out his own ends. Thus, the gradually widening trail followed by Anitoo and his band of musicians made toward a great archway that swept upward in a glistening half circle of white stone. In the center of this rounded arch, twenty-five feet from the ground, gleamed a huge round tablet upon whose smooth white surface could be distinguished a series of engraved characters. These characters, outlined in gold, were immediately recognized by General Herran as similar in design to the picture-writing, presumably of Chibcha origin, that covered a rocky promontory rising above one of the foothills skirting the Bogota tableland.

The mighty portal to which this tablet formed the keystone, was only partially the work of man. Here the elemental forces that originally hollowed out the great central chamber through which the explorers had passed, had encountered a granitic rock effectually resisting their ravages. Hence, the narrowing of the passage-way to the diameter of the half-circle described by the white arch, and hence the opportunity that had been seized by



an aboriginal race of men to complete and embellish what nature had so nobly planned. The sides of the arch rose in majestic columns, shaped and smoothed to the semblance of such pillars as those used in the massive temples of ancient Egypt; and, still bearing out this similarity, each of these pillars stood at the head of a long row that stretched away indefinitely in the darkness beyond. The curve of the arch overhead had also followed the simplest of lines, but with so glowing a symmetry that the beholder yielded to the conviction that here, whether of Nature's design or Man's, he stood on the threshold of a realm wherein were garnered treasures of art and science unique in the world's history. Besides the golden characters engraved on the keystone of this gigantic portal there was but one attempt at sculptural adornment. This was the rudely carved head of a condor, made to curve downward from the central tablet of the arch, as if the sleepless duty had been given to this winged monarch of the Andes of inspecting all who passed beneath its lofty eyrie.

Before this imposing structure the explorers paused in astonishment. Anitoo smiled, somewhat disdainfully, and signed to them to enter. This they were loath to do until they could learn more definitely whither the cavemen were leading them.

"Senores," remonstrated Anitoo, "when you were lost in this cave, I came to your rescue. Now, you must follow me."

"That is very good," said Miranda irritably. "We have enough of this cave. We want to go out."

"Follow me," persisted Anitoo.

"You take us out?"

"I take you to the queen," he retorted.

"Why we go to your queen? We make nothing with your queen."

"Ah, but perhaps she make something with you."

"Caramba! What she make with me?"

"You will see."

The explorers looked at each other helplessly. One thing was evident—the Indians had no intention of parting with them. But they could not tell whether they were hostile or friendly. They were not treated as captives; but they felt that any attempt to escape would be quickly frustrated. They were too far outnumbered by the cavemen to make resistance possible. Leighton therefore decided that there was nothing for it but submission. Upon this the Indians gave a grunt of satisfaction, and Anitoo signaled to advance, pointing upward to the Sign of the Condor.

But the signal came too late.

Out of the darkness, from the portion of the cave they had just left, rose a yell of defiance, followed by a flight of arrows and a volley of pistol shots. Running towards them, but still a good distance off, they could see a huddle of figures, dimly lighted by a few torches of wood, interspersed with lanterns similar to those used by the explorers. There was no time to make out who the enemy was. Evidently they planned to carry things before them by the swiftness of their attack, hoping to catch the cavemen off their guard. They went at it pell-mell, discharging their missiles as they ran—but with deadly enough aim nevertheless. One Indian of Anitoo's party fell, struck down by an arrow. His comrades, enraged by this, formed a close line of battle around him,

taking, as they did so, from the folds of their togas certain innocent looking objects, apparently long metal tubes, which they pointed at their assailants. The explorers failed to recognize these implements at first; then, as the Indians put them to their mouths, they realized that they were nothing more nor less than blowpipes, weapons used to-day only by the most primitive races. But the cavemen handled these weapons skillfully, pouring a goodly shower of darts into the turbulent throng advancing to meet them. As the hail of arrows and shooting of pistols continued, however, it was evident that the damage inflicted by the blowpipes was not enough to check the approach of the enemy, who exceeded the cavemen in numbers and were anxious to engage them at close quarters. This Anitoo determined to prevent. Shouting to his men, he urged them to retreat within the archway before which they were fighting, a command they refused to obey, infuriated as they were by the loss of several of their number. Their assailants, steadily pressing on, were soon near enough to give the cavemen the desired opportunity. Blowguns, bows and arrows were cast aside, and they jumped into a hand-to-hand fight, with short pikes and such weapons as chance provided.

It was then that the explorers seemed to reach the utmost limit of their misfortunes. Except for Andrew's pocket-knife and the revolvers of Herran and Miranda, they were without weapons, and thus practically defenseless in the thick of a combat that at every moment gained in intensity. They were bewildered by the flashing lights of the torches, and kept getting in the way of Anitoo's men at the most inopportune times. Naturally, General Herran, as the only one among them who had

been in actual military service, did his best to keep the others in some sort of order; but his protests and commands, unintelligible to all but Miranda, went for very little. In vain he looked for some sheltered corner into which he could withdraw his little party; but the fierce fighting all around them shut off any such easy way of escape. There seemed to be nothing to do but stay where they were—and he shot, as Mrs. Quayle hysterically put it. And the shooting certainly increased enough in volume every moment to warrant that lady's dismal view of the matter.

But Herran, although fighting in caves was quite out of his line, was not the kind of soldier to give up in despair—even with two women on his hands and three men who were quite as inexperienced and helpless in warfare as the women. The fiasco of Panama still rankled in his soul, and he resolved this time to let as few of the enemy escape him as possible. It was a serious business, but—at least he had a revolver, and he intended to use it.

Plunging ahead of the others into the thick of the mob that faced him, he shot right and left, and—according to Miranda, who watched the affair delightedly—every shot found its mark. This was all very well, and cheering enough to the explorers. It looked, indeed, for the moment, as if the tide of battle was about to be turned in their favor by the Hero of Panama. But then, all of a sudden, as was bound to happen, the General's cartridges gave out, leaving him an animated sort of target in the midst of the men he had been attacking with such ferocity. There were cries of dismay from those who had been watching his brave exploit, a roar of rage from Miranda, who rushed forward, revolver in hand, to de-

fend his old comrade. But Miranda was too late. A burly caveman, one of those who had borne the brunt of Herran's onslaught, seeing the latter's plight, whirled aloft a huge club that he carried and brought it down with fatal effect upon the General's head. It was a Homeric blow, and the fall of the hero under it, sung in epic verse, would be described as the crashing to earth of a monarch of the forest, a bull, a lion, or something equally majestic and thunderous.

But the victor in this deadly encounter had no time to enjoy his triumph. Miranda, not able to ward off the terrible blow that he saw descending upon his friend, at least succeeded in inflicting mortal punishment upon the offending caveman who, before he could raise his club to his shoulder again, received the full contents of the Doctor's revolver.

It was the first—and probably the last—time that Miranda could count himself a conqueror on the field of battle. His exultation, however, was short-lived. Not only had he to bewail the loss of Herran, a good friend and a brave leader, but the odds in the combat before him were going so unmistakably against Anitoo and his men, the fighting had become so widespread and desperate, that the safety of the explorers seemed, every moment, more and more a matter for miracles. As nothing further could be done with an empty revolver, Miranda shrugged his shoulders, threw away his now harmless weapon and, turning hastily to his companions, ordered them to put out their torches, fall flat upon their faces where they stood, and to stay motionless in that position until the fortunes of the battle were decided. This they all did, some with an almost incon-



ceivable promptness—and to any one who might be looking on it must have appeared that the enemy had overthrown this little group of people before them with one well directed discharge of their weapons.

In the kind of warfare that now was raging, Anitoo's cavemen, on account of their lack of numbers and deficient training, were unquestionably getting the worst of it. Their white togas, and the flashing lights that they wore, made their escape difficult; obviously it would have fared badly for them if they had been left to fight their battle out alone. But Anitoo was taking no unnecessary chances. Fearing for his own men from the very first, he had dispatched a messenger into that unknown region of the cave lying beyond the Condor Gate. There was more, indeed, than the fate of his own men at stake. He knew that the majority of the enemy were of his own race, and that with them were associated two or three men from the outside world whose presence there, under such circumstances, proved the existence of a formidable conspiracy against that subterranean realm, of which he had spoken vaguely to the explorers, and to which he belonged. The cavemen he had with him, although brave enough, were undisciplined and without military experience. They could make but a poor defense against an attack directed by leaders trained in the rough school of the guerilla. All this Anitoo knew, and the reinforcements for which he had sent arrived barely in time to save his little party from being completely wiped out. But, fortunately for him, they did arrive in time. With a confused din of war cries and trumpetings, a flash of mysterious torches, waving of banners, brandishing of pipes and blowguns, a body of men, sud-

denly appearing out of the dim recesses of the cave, rushed, several hundred strong, upon the encircling throng of invaders. The result was decisive. The rebels, with victory almost in their grasp, were quickly surrounded, many of them killed, while the few who failed to make their escape were taken prisoners.

Among the latter was one who had played a leading part in the attack. He was unarmed, his clothes were torn, an ugly thrust from a pike had slashed across his face. But his bearing was undaunted; the dejection of the vanquished was lacking in the composure with which he regarded Anitoo, before whom his captors led him.

"Well?" he asked scornfully.

"I expected you, Don Raoul," said Anitoo.

The other laughed contemptuously.

"Why are you here?" demanded Anitoo.

"That is a long story. For one thing, your people are tired of living like bats in the dark. With the help of Rafael Segurra, your one great man, I promised to free them."

"Instead, Segurra is killed and you are a prisoner."

"Ah! your muddle-headed rabble have killed him, have they? But, where are my American friends?" he asked abruptly.

"They are here. One of them, I think, was killed. But he was a Bogotano."

"I don't see them."

For the first time Anitoo showed amazement. He called to his men, he looked in every possible and impossible place. The explorers were nowhere to be seen. Their disappearance, moreover, was complicated by the fact that after the retreat of Anitoo's men, the great

portal under the Sign of the Condor had been closed. By this means the outer region of the cave had been shut off, thus preventing the escape of any of the combatants in that direction. As the Americans were not now in sight, it seemed probable that they were on the other side of the stone gateway—although there was a faint possibility that they had sought safety in the unexplored portion of the cave whither Anitoo had been leading them. Either way, their disappearance was certain, nor could Anitoo find out anything definite about them from his men. A few, indeed, remembered seeing them during the fight, and recalled Herran's charge, his subsequent fall, and the swift vengeance brought upon his assailant by Miranda. One man declared that they had all been killed; but as this was quite improbable, and as the statement was uncorroborated, it was promptly put aside as unworthy of belief. The whole thing was very vague. As a matter of fact, every one had been too absorbed in the defeat of Segurra and his men to look after the explorers. Doubtless the latter, it was said, had succeeded in retreating into the darkness of the outer cave. In doing this, it is true, they ran the chance of falling into the hands of Segurra's men—in which case they would have been recaptured by Anitoo.

One strange feature of their disappearance was that the body of Herran had apparently vanished with them. Anitoo remembered the exact spot where the explorers had been stationed during the battle and, consequently, where Herran had fallen. But now, neither living nor dead explorers could be found. It seemed incredible that these people, two of them women, would have hampered themselves in their flight with the body of a dead man.

And yet, there was the evidence of eyewitnesses to the killing of Herran; there was the spot where he had fallen—and as the body was not there now, it was practically certain that the explorers had carried it away with them. In this case they could not have gone very far. As Anitoo was particularly anxious for their capture, and believing that they had returned to the outer cave, where they were in danger of being attacked by what was left of Segurra's men, he sent most of his troops after them, remaining behind with Raoul and a few others until their return.

"It was to get those strangers and bring them to our queen," he said, "that I came out here."

"Well, you have lost them," sneered Raoul. "But you have me. Why not take me to your queen?"

The two men looked at each other in silence. A faint smile lighted Anitoo's usually immobile features.

"Yes," he said; "at last you will reach the place you have plotted against for so many months. But it will do you no good."

"Don't be too sure of that," growled Raoul. "I want to see your queen——"

"You shall see her. But what can you do? Your friend, Segurra, the first traitor to the Land of the Condor, is dead. Your men are defeated——"

"Not all!" shouted Raoul. "Look around you!"

With those who knew him Anitoo enjoyed a reputation for astuteness that had led to his being chosen for the command of the diminutive army considered necessary for the defense of the Land of the Condor. He was valiant, absolutely trustworthy. But he was accustomed to deal only with simple problems, with people of com-

paratively guileless natures. Treachery was out of the domain of his experience. And now he was to pay dearly for the lack of prudence that had allowed him to send away, on an indefinite mission, the troops he should have kept to guard his prisoner.

Startled by Raoul's exultant cry Anitoo seized a pike from one of the two men who had stayed with him. If he had fallen into an ambush he would at least make a brave fight to free himself. But resistance from the first was hopeless. The slight eminence on which he stood with Raoul was surrounded by a score or more men who had crept up on him, their lights extinguished, and protected by the impenetrable darkness of the cave. As Anitoo and his two followers still carried the mysterious torches that had excited the wonder of the explorers, they offered an excellent mark to their concealed antagonists. And now the latter, dimly visible on the outer edge of the circle of light cast by these torches, jumped to their feet and, with weapons poised, made a rush for their victims.

"So! Now for your queen!" yelled Raoul.

Anitoo made a desperate lunge with his pike at the man beside him. But the latter was too quick for him. Dodging the blow, Raoul managed to wrest the pike from his grasp. There was a tigerish struggle between the two men, shouts of fury and triumph from those looking on. Then, overpowered by the number of his assailants, and mortally wounded, Anitoo fell to the ground. He had been so certain of the defeat of his antagonists that this sudden turn in his fortunes filled him, even at the approach of death, with the gloomiest forebodings.

"Ah! my poor queen—lost!" he gasped with his last breath.



Raoul snatched the torch from the dead man's tunic and waved it above his head.

"You will be free men now," he cried, "not miserable bats in a cave!"

Those of his hearers who understood his words, spoken in Spanish, repeated them to the others in their own language. There was wild cheering, in which the two followers of Anitoo joined—amazed at their leader's fate—and then a rush for the great gateway. But this impulsive movement of his men did not agree with Raoul's hastily conceived plan of conquest. Delighted by his easily won victory, coming to him in the very hour of defeat, he had no mind to leave Anitoo's hostile troops in his rear—especially as he heard them approaching from the outer cave, and could even catch the first glimmer of their torches.

"Stop!" he commanded. "We need these men. Better to have them friends than enemies. They will come with us. Some of you warn them—tell them what has happened."

His followers, halted in their eager flight, looked at Raoul in amazement. Then, hurriedly repeating to each other what he had said, they suddenly broke into another cheer, while two of their number, in obedience to Raoul's orders, ran towards the approaching troops.

At first the two rebels were met with a flourish of pikes and angry cries that boded ill for their safety. When they succeeded in making themselves heard, however, explaining what had happened and pointing to the dead body of Anitoo in confirmation of Raoul's victory, the cavemen checked their hostile demonstrations, look-

ing from one to the other of the men before them, and then to the little group surrounding Raoul, in astonishment. They had the most exaggerated trust in Anitoo's wisdom and prowess; that he could be vanquished by any one impressed them mightily. The death of their leader was, indeed, a potent argument in favor of the man who had killed him. What did this victorious stranger intend to do now? they asked each other. Then the foremost of them put the question to the two rebels, who answered with contagious enthusiasm:

"He will free us! The wealth of the Condor will be ours! We will have the world—not a cave—to live in!"

The instant effect of this assurance was all that could be desired. One by one took up the words they had just heard with a shout of triumph, waving their weapons in air and declaring that they would follow this new-found leader to the death. Then they all broke into a run, saluting Raoul, when they reached him, with the submissive gesture they were wont to accord their superiors.

Elated by the complete success of his strategy, Raoul looked exultantly at the men prostrate before him. Then he spoke to them sternly.

"Where are the Americans?" he demanded.

"Gone," some of them murmured. "We could not find them."

"Where have they gone? They must be near—somewhere."

"To the queen—they have gone to the queen!"

"Ah, yes! to the queen! Follow quickly! We go to the queen!"

Raoul's words were greeted with a cheer. The men

rose to their feet and all, at a signal from their leader, swept forward to the great gateway, shouting as they ran—

“To the queen! To the queen!”

## XVI

### NARVA

TO return to the explorers, left prostrate on the field of battle, it must be recorded that, for once in his career, Miranda, after his first taste of active fighting, and seeing how the fortunes of the day were going against them, repressed his natural impulsiveness and developed a prudence and caution that would have become a general seasoned in strategy.

"For me it is not good to be here," he whispered sepulchrally to his companions as they lay face downward about him. "We cannot fight. We have no guns. We will be kill. We must go!"

It was a good summary of the situation. Every one agreed to it, so far as their constrained positions would permit an exchange of opinions; but how to act on Miranda's obviously excellent plan was not clear. If they got on their feet again, they would probably be shot—and even if the enemy failed to bring them down right away, they could not make up their minds in which direction to make their escape. To retrace their steps into the depths of the outer cave would bring them between two fires and, aside from other tragic possibilities, would certainly arouse the suspicions of Anitoo and his cavemen. To seek safety in the other direction, to pass within the section of the cave guarded by the

Condor Gate, was to court unknown dangers in a region that loomed dark and mysterious enough. It was this latter course, however, that Miranda chose.

"This Anitoo take us to his queen," he argued. "Perhaps she is good woman. It is better we go alone. Senor Anitoo, he come after."

So they made up their minds to set out at once in search of this unknown queen. She might, or might not, be friendly. But anyway, she would be better than lying on one's stomach between two opposing rows of fighting men. Luckily for the carrying out of their plan, they had extinguished their torches. They were thus in comparative darkness, hidden alike from friend and foe. Indeed, if any one had been able to see them in their present prostrate position they would have been taken for dead, and escaped further notice. This view of the situation becoming clear to Miranda, he cautiously raised his head and peered into the darkness before him. A few feet farther on he could dimly make out the body of the huge caveman who had fallen before his revolver a few moments ago—and at the side of the caveman lay his victim, General Herran. The sight stirred Miranda's grief for the loss of his friend to a fresh outburst, leading him to abandon, with one of those impulsive changes characteristic of him, his plans for escape.

"Ah, Caramba!" he wailed, with the nearest approach to tears he had ever been guilty of; "he was one great hero! He was a man! I not leave him! He die for me!"

And then he fell to stroking his friend's face—wet from the blood pouring from his wounds, as he supposed—caressing him somewhat roughly, indeed, in the vehe-



mence of his grief, and absent-mindedly tugging at his great beard, as he had so often seen the General do himself. The more he pondered his loss, the more doleful it appeared to him; and this feeling grew until he reached such a pitch of pathos that he resolved never to leave Herran, dead or alive. Better to die right there with him, he said, than to abandon his mortal remains to the canaille who had killed him.

These lamentations and melancholy vows, however, aroused some feeble objections among Miranda's companions, who were growing restless in their uncomfortable positions, and saw no relief in the idea of staying indefinitely where they were. But Miranda paid no heed to what they said, except to growl out an expletive or two between his wails of grief, and to stroke his fallen hero's face with an increased vigor of affection. And then, in the midst of this lugubrious occupation, he suddenly jumped to his feet, regardless of whatever lurking enemy there might be near him, and started capering around Herran's body.

"This hero, he is not dead!" he cried in a sort of whispered ecstasy. "When I rub the nose of him—Caramba!—he try to breathe! And he cough and say some words in Spanish!"

It was fortunate that the darkness was deep enough to hide Miranda from observation, else his dancing figure and the gestures of delight with which he accompanied this announcement would have brought upon him more attention from the enemy than might have been to his liking. Another fact in his favor, besides the darkness, was that the fighting had drifted away from this corner of the cave, leaving the explorers quite alone, in an ob-

curity that shrouded them from danger, but that still revealed to them enough of the outlines of the cave in the distance to show them where they were and how they might best steer their way in safety through the Condor Gate, as Miranda had at first proposed. And now all were eager to corroborate the extraordinary news that Herran was still alive.

True to his professional instincts, Miranda plumped down on his knees at the General's side, and commenced a series of probings, pummelings and rubbings in his search for wounds, mortal or otherwise. He worked with his usual feverish haste, and it was not long before his activities drew from Herran protests that became more and more distinct and emphatic. Then Miranda remembered that he had seen the caveman's club descend upon the General's head, so that if there were any wounds to be attended to they would be in that part of his anatomy and nowhere else. And there, sure enough, under Herran's battered hat and his smashed miner's lamp, was a massive lump that testified to the magnitude of the blow that had crumpled him up. Indeed, had it not been for the hat and the lamp, serving in this case as a buffer, even Herran's iron skull must have yielded under the weight of the caveman's attack.

At first Miranda thought that the skull surely was fractured, and thereupon investigated the lump on top of it. This he did with so much earnestness and nicety of detail that he was soon rewarded by a series of such vigorous oaths and threats as to leave no doubt in his mind of his victim's ability to look out for himself.

"He's all right, this General of Panama!" he exclaimed gleefully. "His brains is not smashed. But perhaps he

have a headache. Soon he fight again. And now we go to the queen."

The subject of these optimistic assurances sat up with a groan, blinking his eyes savagely at his companions, who were now crowded around him, and wiping disgustedly from his face some of the kerosene oil that had trickled down from the mangled miner's lamp, and that Miranda had first taken for Herran's blood.

"Now, we go—we fly!" urged Miranda, his mind completely absorbed again in the problem of extricating himself and his companions from the dangers of the battlefield. "They not see us. We save our life and go to this queen. You are all right, General—is it not so?" he added impatiently.

The other looked at him venomously and groaned. Then, shaking himself, like a dog who has been temporarily worsted in a rough-and-tumble fight, he got to his feet and staggered along for a few paces.

"Yes, Caramba! I am all right," he said in Spanish, with painful sarcasm. "It is a headache, as you say, that is all! Let us go!"

"That is good! Come!" grunted Miranda approvingly.

At first Herran was somewhat uncertain of his footing. But Miranda helped him until he got over his dazed feeling sufficiently to walk alone. Then they all followed along, single file, skirting the edge of the darkness, beyond which they could dimly see the cavemen fighting, but without being able to tell how the fortunes of the battle were going, and making for the Condor Gate as quickly as they could. Once beyond that point they would be relieved, they thought, at least temporarily,

from the inconveniences of a battle in which most of them had been forced to play the part of target only. Having passed this danger zone, they would set about placing as generous a distance as possible between themselves and their warlike companions. Further retreat, it is true, meant the abandonment of the outer cave for a venture into realms whither Anitoo had been conducting them, practically as captives, to an unknown fate. But the situation left them no alternative. Everything depended on their finding the queen—and then, having found her, their fate depended on the kind of woman she might be.

"A great thing this," muttered Leighton to himself; "at my age to be in the power of the queen of a race of cavemen!"

"They are good peoples," remarked Miranda dubiously.

"I trust Anitoo," declared Una. "His queen will protect us."

"She will behead us!" exclaimed Mrs. Quayle, whose spirits were hopelessly flustered by the uproar of battle that resounded through the cave. "Queens always behead people. Why did we ever come into this frightful place? We can never escape."

"Do be quiet, woman!" commanded Leighton, who did not care to hear his own thoughts voiced in this manner.

"Hold the tongue!" growled Miranda savagely.

"We have escaped already," said Una soothingly. "I believe this path will take us out of the cave."

"Caramba! that is so," agreed Miranda delightedly. "It is change—and there is some light."

"Yes, there actually is some light," said Leighton. "But—where does it come from?"

Having passed through the great portal that separated them from Anitoo and his men, they were soon following a narrow path that ran between two high walls of rock. This path was at first scarcely discernible. As they turned a sharp corner, however, the darkness gradually lifted and they found it possible, for the first time, to distinguish certain objects a considerable distance ahead of them—and judging by the direction in which the shadows from these objects were thrown, it was evident that the light was not a reflection cast by torches carried by warring cavemen.

This discovery was hailed as a momentous one, open to two interpretations. Since, as every one knows, caves are never lighted from sources contained in themselves, they must now be nearing another party of cavemen, who were carrying lanterns, or else, through some twist in subterranean topography, they had stumbled upon an unexpected passageway to the outer world. No sooner was the latter possibility suggested, however, than its improbability was recognized. No rays from sun or moon were ever like these—blue, flickering, ghostly—illuminating the grotesque forms around them. This light had a tingling quality, as of sparks that snap and glitter when they are thrown off from an electric battery. It was certainly not sunlight, or moonlight either, as the explorers quickly realized. There remained the idea that it came from lights carried by an approaching band of cavemen.

"It is like the torches of Anitoo's musicians!" exclaimed Una; "it's not from the sun."

"It begins to be too bright, and at the same time too far off, for that," objected Leighton.



"It is one big fire——" said Miranda.

"A bonfire," interjected Andrew.

"——and when we come there we will see."

Pressing on along this path, the light steadily increased, although revealing to the explorers nothing of its origin. They could walk now at a fairly round pace, and as their range of vision extended their attention was completely taken up in a study of the strange objects to be seen in the unknown world about them.

Great walls of white basalt, veined with broad bands of glistening emerald, towered on either side, reaching up to a crystalline roof that spread forth, far as eye could reach, at an altitude scorning the limitations of human architecture. The irregularities of the outer cave, with its rough boulders and piles of fallen *débris*, its dark masses of shapeless sandstone, was exchanged here for forms of marvelous symmetry, fashioned, one could but imagine, for the enjoyment of a race of beings to whom the majesty of beauty must be an ever-living reality. Seen by the explorers, in the wavering half light that filled the cave, the bold outlines of cliff and battlement were softened and blended in a vague witchery of design suggesting meanings and distances varying with the fancy of the beholder. It was a vale of enchantments, an Aladdin's cave, from which anything might be expected with the mere rubbing of a ring—or a lamp.

As the path broadened the walls became less precipitous; on their sides objects could be distinguished that, anywhere else, would have been taken for man's handiwork. Tiny dwellings appeared to be carved out of solid rock that jutted forth from dizzying heights, while feathery forms of dwarf trees and plants, whose leaves

were of a spectral transparency, whose branches were twisted in thread-like traceries of lines and figures, found sustenance where not a foothold of earth was discernible. That such evidences of botanical life should appear in a cavern remote from the sun's heat and light was surprising enough to all the explorers; to Leighton it savored of the miraculous. Ever since the adventure with the Black Magnet the savant, indeed, had drifted into such a state of bewilderment that he was more helpless in grasping and overcoming the difficulties confronting them than those of the party who had little of his learning or experience. Ordinarily he was accustomed to treat with contempt phenomena that to others appeared inexplicable. But here he was as a mariner adrift in midocean, in a rudderless ship, without sails or compass. Everything seemed at odds with the settled beliefs and theories of science as he knew them. Nothing was as it should be. He was thus less capable as a leader than the volatile Miranda who, although fairly well trained in the modern way of looking at things, did not trouble himself to explain the marvels that met them at every turn in their wanderings.

"They live in the walls, these people!" exclaimed the doctor, "and they have trees and plants without the sun and rain."

That was all that need be said. The fact was a fact, delightful beyond most facts just because it was so outlandish, so opposed to all experience, and it gained nothing in interest or anything else by trying to explain it—although Miranda did, on occasion, take a hand at explaining these puzzling matters.

Entertaining as these discoveries and discussions might

be, however, the feeling that they had stumbled into a region inhabited by a race of men who lived in a manner unknown to them—and who, moreover, had already given evidence of unfriendliness towards strangers—was not reassuring to Miranda or any of the rest of them. The end of their adventure grew every moment more puzzling. Since their escape from Anitoo they had not actually met any one. Perhaps this part of the cave was not inhabited after all. Perhaps Anitoo's talk of a queen was not to be taken too seriously. The curious objects projecting from the walls far above them might not be the human dwellings that at first sight they appeared. Even the signs of an unearthly vegetation might prove a sort of mirage, or they might turn out to be mere specimens of basaltic formation—fantastic enough, certainly—wrought by the subterranean convulsions that had given birth to this cave measureless ages ago. But the air had become so strangely invigorating, the mysterious light so pervasive and even brilliant, that anything seemed possible. This atmospheric vitality, a certain bracing quality in the air, had been noted, indeed, among their first experiences in the outer cave. But, compared with this that now tingled and coursed in their veins like some conquering elixir, the air of the outer cave was chill, dead. Here life might germinate and be sustained—although there lacked, as Miranda had pointed out, "the sun and rain" to aid in these daily miracles of nature.

But it was idle to theorize, useless to harbor doubts that led nowhere. So, they wandered on, marveling at the strangeness and the magnitude of this underground world, and yielding themselves, as familiarity disarmed their fears, to the charm of it all. For there was beauty of a

rare and thrilling quality in these majestic cliffs whose perfectly proportioned sides gleamed in all the variegations of color belonging to certain kinds of basalt. Displaying in structure the columnar forms peculiar to this rock, the admirable symmetry produced easily suggested the work of a human architect gifted in all the cunning of his art. And now the widening space before them disclosed unmistakable signs of the human agency they had suspected.

They stood at the verge of a precipice. Below them stretched a wide and comparatively level plain, vaulted over by a crystalline canopy supported by innumerable clusters of slender columns, and sheltering low-storied houses, or huts, collected together in the close companionship of a thriving little village. The familiar accompaniments of such a scene, supposing that it formed a part of some straggling, hospitable highway in the outer world, were there. At the doorways of the houses men and women stopped to talk; children played in the vacant spaces that served for yards and streets; even diminutive animals, that appeared in the distance to be near of kin to the patient, ubiquitous burro, jogged along under their burdens of merchandise. The villagers were evidently of the same race as Anitoo and his companions, dressed like them in white flowing togas, but lacking their indefinable charm and lordliness of bearing. Anywhere else they would have been taken for peasants, attired somewhat fantastically, engaged in the most primitive occupations. Here, remote from everything that lives under the sun, their very simplicity was cause for wonder, if not for fear.

So far the explorers had not attracted the attention of

the villagers. Where the former stood they could watch the scene below without being observed themselves. But they knew that this security could not last. Either they had to go on and make themselves known, or return to Anitoo, who by this time, possibly, was at the mercy of Raoul and his party. They hesitated. The problem was a knotty one—but it was not left for them to decide. From an unexpected quarter came an interruption, startling in some respects, that solved their difficulties—temporarily at least—and seemed a promising augury that whatever dangers confronted them they might rely on backing, of a sort. A heavily veiled figure, bent with age and toiling down a precipitous path from the rocky height beneath which they were sheltered, silently approached them. At sight of this singular being, Mrs. Quayle, not yet accustomed to this land of uncomfortable surprises, started to run away. Her frantic efforts at speed restored the confidence of the others and, after she had been unceremoniously brought to order by Leighton, the little party managed to face the newcomer with some show of composure.

Leaning on a long staff, the descending figure, ignoring the others, advanced towards Una, who stood by herself beneath a low shelf of rock. Pausing within a few feet of the wondering girl, the veil was slowly lifted, revealing the seamed and wrinkled face and long flowing white hair of a woman whose great age was visible in every feature. In bygone times she would have been proclaimed a witch, although in her aspect there was nothing of the malevolence tradition attributes to witches. But there was the solemnity, the dramatic gesture of the sibyl—a being who is supposed to rank several grades



higher than the witch—when, with uplifted hand, she commanded the attention of those to whom she deigned to speak. Drawn by something of benignity in her glance, and undaunted by her otherwise fantastic appearance, Una came forward to meet her—a movement that at once elicited a sign of approval.

“She is one loca, one crazy woman,” growled Miranda.

“Of course she is dangerous!” exclaimed Mrs. Quayle.

General Herran shrugged his shoulders and muttered vigorous profanities in Spanish.

“Nonsense! The woman is probably slightly demented,” was Leighton’s judgment in the matter. Una, apparently, was without opinion as to the character or the intentions of the singular being whose gaze was fastened upon her, and whose outstretched arm singled her out from the rest.

“Oh! if she would only speak in a language we could understand,” she exclaimed. To the amazement of every one, the wish was gratified as soon as uttered. For the old woman—whether witch, sibyl, or lunatic—answered in plain English, an English somewhat defective in pronunciation, it is true, but correct enough in form to give evidence of an unusual amount of study on the part of the speaker.

“I expected you. Come with me,” she commanded.

Astonishment silenced further comment. For the moment even Miranda had nothing to say. Then, recovering his usual assurance, he expressed himself with emphasis.

“Caramba! She is one witch,” he declared.

The old woman shook her head impatiently. It was with Una alone she wanted to speak; she resented as

interference any word from the others. Una, on her part, was strangely drawn to her. The odd dress, the air of mystery that repelled the others, increased her interest. She was impressed by her calm assumption of authority, convinced that she was there to help them. And then, a novel idea flashed through her mind.

"Are you the queen?" she asked abruptly.

The stern Indian features relaxed into the ghost of a smile, accompanied by a feeble chuckle from a lean and wrinkled throat.

"I am Narva," she announced quietly—but whether "Narva" was the queen she did not deign to say.

"Very well, my lady," argued Miranda, "but we want the queen."

"Silence!" commanded Narva, turning for the first time from Una to the others. "Come with me," she repeated.

"But why?" persisted the doctor; "what for we go with you, my senora, unless you are queen?"

"Perhaps she is the queen," suggested Andrew; "only she doesn't want to say so. She didn't deny it!" a view of the matter that met with no response.

But, queen or not, Una was ready to pin her faith to this strange being who had accosted them in so unexpected a manner. It was useless even to attempt an explanation of how an aged Indian woman, answering to the name of Narva, inhabiting a cave in the remote Andes, could talk English, and how it happened that she appeared to know them—a party of distressed foreigners—whom she had certainly never met before. So long as she refused to explain—and refuse she certainly did—all this would have to remain the puzzle that it was. But, logical or not, dangerous or not, Narva seemed to be

something very like their last hope. Her bearing, although decidedly reserved, was not unkindly—was even friendly—and so Una determined to follow her without further discussion. The others scarcely shared her confidence. Mrs. Quayle stuck to it that Narva was dangerous, probably a witch; Leighton was still in doubt as to her sanity. Finally, Miranda put the point blank question—

“Why we go with her?”

“Simply because we have no one else to go with, no other plan,” was Una’s prompt reply.

There was no gainsaying this. They were wandering, without guide or clew of any kind, through a cave filled with mysteries and dangers. On the trail behind them were two bands of natives, absorbed in the occupation of cutting each other’s throats. From one of these bands it was certain they had much to fear. In front of them was a considerable body of cavemen, not at present engaged in war, it is true, but who might, for all they knew, prove unfriendly. Witch or queen, Narva volunteered to guide them—somewhere.

“At least we must know where she intends to take us,” declared Leighton.

“I take you from these,” said Narva, pointing in the direction of the villagers.

“Why should we go from them?” asked Leighton.

“They kill you,” was the laconic reply.

“What bloodthirsty people they all are!” exclaimed Andrew.

But Narva’s calm statement of what was to be expected proved decisive. There remained the doubt as to her sincerity. The timorous Mrs. Quayle scented a

diabolical plot in the whole affair, and her fears were shared by some of the others. Only Una would brook no delay.

"We want to get out of the cave," she said, addressing Narva. "We have lost the way—you will guide us?"

"Something you do first," retorted Narva; "then you go free."

The suggestion that they were still, in a sense, prisoners, and that some kind of service was expected of them before they could regain their freedom, was not pleasant. What was it that they could do for so singular a person as this, who gave the impression of having planned to meet them in this very spot? Narva took a witch's privilege to speak in riddles. No amount of questioning could get her to explain what she meant. The answer to everything was always "follow me"—and as she pointed to the valley whenever she said this, they gathered that the direction they were expected to take was practically that which they had been pursuing ever since they left the Condor Gate. As this would inevitably bring them among the villagers—who, they had just been told, were prepared to "kill them"—they could not understand Narva's plan at all. There being no choice left them, however, they yielded and went with her.

The path leading into the valley was abrupt and dangerous. Narva, striding ahead, was unimpeded by obstacles that left the others breathless and panic-stricken. They wanted to turn back before they had gone very far—but this would have been quite as difficult to accomplish as to go on.

At this point, apparently, the geological construction of the cave had undergone some radical changes. Con-

vulsions, undoubtedly of volcanic origin, had rent the solid walls of granite in two, leaving irregular chasms, of uncertain depth, to be traversed before the smooth floor of the valley could be reached. These chasms, where their width demanded it, were spanned by swaying bridges of rope—or liana—and wood that proved a sore trial to the weaker members of the party, delaying their progress to an extent that seriously strained Narva's patience. The old Indian was especially put out by Mrs. Quayle, whom she contemptuously called "baby," and whose pathetic helplessness astride a plank over a yawning cavern aroused in her the nearest approach to laughter she had shown.

Under Narva's guidance, however, the difficulties of this downward trail were overcome without mishap. The perilous abysses, once crossed, appeared not more than miniature dangers in retrospect; but immediately facing them, on this plain that, at a distance, had seemed so charming and pastoral in character, there was menace enough for the most daring. At first sight of the invaders, for so they were deemed, the villagers showed unmistakable hostility. Dropping their various occupations with one accord, they confronted the explorers in so threatening a manner that the latter had either to defend themselves as best they might, or retreat. But the thought of those villainous chasms, spanned by flimsy bridges of rope, was too appalling to offer the remotest hope of safety in flight. Anything would be better than a return—if return were even possible—over so hazardous a path.

"We fight!" announced Miranda through clenched teeth—and, regretting his lost revolver, he threw him-



self into as warlike an attitude as his rotund figure would permit.

This had anything but a quieting effect on the villagers. From every direction volunteers hastened to strengthen their line of battle, and it might have fared badly with the enterprising doctor, upon whom a concentrated attack resembling a football rush was about to be launched, had it not been for the interference of Narva. The old Indian woman, scornful at first of the excited demonstration of the villagers, now took an active part in what was going on. Brushing Miranda aside, she checked the advancing mob with a torrent of angry words that sounded like the scolding lecture of an outraged school teacher bringing her refractory pupils to order. As she spoke in the native language of the Indians, what she said was totally unintelligible to those whom she was defending. But on the cavemen the effect of her words was immediate. The shouts ceased; the hastily formed line of battle was broken. The angry villagers acknowledged Narva's authority by every sign of submission—sullenly given, it is true—and the way was clear and free for the "invaders" to go on.

The singular episode impressed them deeply. They realized that they were surrounded by people who did not want them in this underworld of theirs, and that they were, at the same time, under the protection of a being who, mad or inspired, was powerful enough to stand between them and danger. Who she was, or why she befriended them remained a mystery. On this point Narva was as uncommunicative as ever. On occasion, as they had just witnessed, she was capable of the volubility of a fishwife; with them her reserve was impregnable.

"Follow me!" she commanded—and there was nothing for it but obey. Miranda, who was the immediate cause of the trouble, muttered maledictions on the fate that left him at the mercy of an eccentric beldame who might be leading them to some unthinkable witch's dance—and the rest exhorted him to curb his warlike propensities in the future.

Gliding ahead at a quicker pace than before, Narva led the way along the narrow path on each side of which stood the huts of the villagers. These huts were not more than thirty in number, built of the rough-hewn stone of the cave. Each, apparently, contained two, or in some cases, three rooms on the ground floor. Roofs they had none, a deficiency in architecture evidently without inconvenience, since the great vaulted dome of the cave furnished them with whatever protection overhead was necessary. The whole series of little houses composing the village resembled one huge, hospitable communal dwelling, not unlike the ancient pueblo ruins of Arizona, in which there was the privacy desired by separate families, together with a close union of household interests that is scarcely possible in settlements where each group of individuals lives under its own roof-tree. As if further to preserve this communal manner of living, the openings into the huts were without doors, although, in a few instances, curtains of a heavy red material served as doors. These curtains were adorned with thin plates of gold, cut in primitive designs depicting various forms of animal life. The huts so marked the explorers took to be the dwellings either of village dignitaries, or buildings devoted to public uses.

There was scant opportunity to observe more than the

barest outlines of this singular underground settlement, as the pace set by Narva left no time for loitering. But the explorers felt little desire to prolong their stay here, although they soon forgot their fears as they noted the sullen deference with which their mysterious guide was everywhere greeted. The villagers retired before them into their various dwellings, and as the little company passed along the unobstructed street it was welcomed with demonstrations of respect resembling the homage accorded some eastern potentate who deigns to visit his subjects. The change was grateful to those who a moment ago had been the objects of popular disfavor, at the same time that it stimulated their curiosity regarding Narva. The latter paid no heed to her surroundings, but her progress was timed to the needs of those who followed her. An occasional backward glance gave proof that her interest in them, whether for good or ill, had not abated. Talk with her, however, was impossible; and thus the straggling little village, with its groups of obsequious Indians, was traversed in silence.

When the last hut had disappeared in the distance Narva turned abruptly. The path was again becoming precipitous, and although the mysterious light with which the cave was illumined revealed whatever obstacles were in the way, there were dark chasms in the overhanging cliffs that filled the timid with grim forebodings. Where they stood the ground was level, making a little platform, or square, three sides of which were unprotected by walls. On the fourth side an arched opening in the smooth face of a lofty tower of granite, glittering with countless facets of crystal, served as entrance to a spacious interior. Emblazoned on the keystone of this arch

was the same emblem that marked the cyclopean gateway to the inhabited portion of the cave—the rudely carved figure of a condor. Beneath this sculptured symbol Narva stood for a moment regarding the others with stern composure. Then she pointed to the shadowy depths within.

“Enter!” she commanded.

## XVII

### A SONG AND ITS SEQUEL

NARVA'S forbidding presence promised little in the way of cheer or warmth of welcome to her wearied companions. The singular dwelling into which the latter were ushered recalled, at first glance, the gloomy abode of some medieval anchorite to whose theory of existence anything approaching luxury was to be shunned, rooted out, as an obstruction to the soul's growth. Whether or not Narva's mode of living was actually based on these mystical considerations, her home, at least, in its lack of visible comforts, seemed the typical hermit's cell. Here was neither superfluous ornament nor evidence of the slightest touch of feminine grace or care. The blackened walls of granite rose with uncompromising abruptness, unbroken by niche or shelf, to a ceiling whose vague outlines were lost in darkness. A truss of straw was thrown in one corner of the apartment, and upon it was spread a rough woolen counterpane. Three flattened blocks of stone, placed at intervals along the walls, served as benches; in the center a rock-table, carefully smoothed and large enough for a banquet fairly regal in its dimensions, rose four feet from the floor. Upon this table, with its suggested possibilities of entertainment, stood a large jug, curiously fashioned of a single crystal,



within which faintly gleamed an opalescent liquid. There were also two stone platters, one containing heaped-up cubes of a white substance resembling bread, and the other certain broiled fish—they looked like fish—whose globular bodies and reddish-blue flesh aroused misgivings, if not a more decided feeling of repugnance, among those unfamiliar with subterranean bills of fare.

But the explorers were famished enough to attack anything. The dangers they had escaped, the fatigue arising from prolonged exposure and unwonted exercise, the bracing air of the cave, would have corrected the most fastidious taste and made even boot-leather palatable. But Narva's fish, notwithstanding their sickly hue, were not to be classed, by any means, with boot-leather. After the first wave of disgust, even the suspicious Miranda scented a welcome repast in the dishes spread before him, while the others were in this only too eager to follow his lead. Their hostess, aware of their hunger, gave a reassuring gesture of invitation.

"Eat!" she said solemnly; "it is for you."

They needed no second bidding. Scorning the absence of chairs and the ordinary dishes and utensils that go with a meal, they fell to and, with the first mouthful, expressed approval by varying grunts and exclamations. Even the fish was voted a delicacy of superlative excellence. In flavor it recalled the sweet succulence of rare tropical fruit, like the cirimoya, with a soupçon of spice that gave it the fillip of a genuine culinary masterpiece. As for the bread, it was not bread at all, but some mysterious compound of flesh and vegetable, the nutritive qualities of which were eagerly explained and extolled by the ravenous doctor.

Una, however, was denied participation in this unexpected and singular feast. From the first Narva had shown a special interest in the girl; caused, doubtless, by the latter's early expression of confidence in her offer to protect them. This interest, it now appeared, had a distinct purpose in view, which Narva lost no time in carrying out. Satisfied that the others were provided with the entertainment they desired, she took Una by the hand and led her to a distant corner of the apartment.

"Will you go with me?" she asked her in a whisper.

Una hesitated. To leave her uncle and the others, trusting herself entirely to this mysterious being, was more than she had bargained for. Divining the cause of her irresolution, Narva spoke reassuringly.

"They are safe," she said. "We will come back to them."

Something in the older woman's manner won Una's confidence. She felt that a way out of their difficulties was being offered her. Hope of a still greater result silenced her fears.

"Yes," she said.

Then, behind one of the stone benches, yielding to Narva's touch, a door slowly opened, revealing a narrow passage upon which they entered.

Glancing hastily back, Una noticed that the door, a great block of stone revolving with the utmost nicety in grooves made for the purpose, had closed behind them. She was thus separated from her companions and alone with a singular being whose purpose in all this she was at a loss to fathom. Narva's trustworthiness had appealed to her, it is true, and she had followed her leading when the others held back. But there was an air about

Narva, suggesting the occasional freaks of one whose wits are not of the steadiest, that might well cause anxiety among those temporarily in her power. Just now, however, there was no sign of trouble, and Una repressed any outward evidence of alarm she might feel. Narva, indeed, seemed to have lost the solemn dignity she had assumed hitherto, and became every moment more ingratiating, reassuring. Gently stroking Una's hand, she stopped in her hurried walk down the corridor and, throwing back the heavy veil obscuring her features, showed a face marked by the nobility and calm of age. Its serenity and kindness strengthened Una's confidence.

"We will go back to them," said Narva; "but first we must see," she added enigmatically.

"Why have you brought me here?" asked Una.

"Something you will see. You will help us, and then I will help you. I knew you were coming."

The explanation, if it could be called one, increased Una's mystification.

"You could know nothing of me. How could you know?" she persisted. "How can I help you?"

"Ah, Narva is very old," she replied, her long bony fingers passing through the masses of snow-white hair that fell to her shoulders, "and with the old there is knowledge. Long time I lived with your people, far from here. All the years I keep the secret of this Kingdom of the Condor. No one knows—if they know they do not dare to come. Only one—he knows, he has come. And now, you have come. Why?"

The abrupt question was confusing. Una wondered how much she knew, how much she dared tell her. The inscrutable eyes fixed upon her revealed nothing. Was

it to learn her secret Narva had lured her away from the others? The narrow gloomy passage where they stood was remote from the inhabited portion of the cave; the door to Narva's dwelling, now that it was closed, was not distinguishable from the rest of the wall into which it fitted so admirably. Had Una tried, she could not have found her way back. She was completely at Narva's mercy—but the old Indian had shown only friendliness hitherto, it was reasonable to suppose that her proffer of assistance was genuine, since motive for treachery was lacking. Impulsively reaching this conclusion, Una answered Narva's question without reserve.

"I have come," she said, "because I am looking for one who is dear to me. I think he is lost in this cave."

"Why?" asked Narva, showing neither surprise nor incredulity.

"Once before he disappeared, and then he was lost here."

"When?"

"Three years ago. A man who was with him told me. But—he is not his friend. Perhaps it is not true."

"It is true."

"How do you know that?" asked Una eagerly.

"I know," she replied quietly, but with convincing emphasis.

"Then he is here! I am right. You know where he is. You will take me to him!"

"Ah! Perhaps you will not go. You are a white woman; you will be afraid to leave your friends and go with me."

"I am not afraid."

"Perhaps this man you look for has changed. Perhaps

he will not know you. And this other, his enemy, perhaps he is here. There will be trouble, danger."

"Take me to him!" demanded Una passionately. "If there is danger, I should be with him. I am not afraid. I trust you."

"That is good," said Narva. "Come!"

Una now became aware that the corridor down which they were slowly walking widened out into a respectable thoroughfare at its further end, whence it abruptly turned and was merged in the main trail that had brought them to Narva's dwelling. Thus, the latter, through some labyrinthine arrangement of passages, was entered at one place and offered an exit in an entirely opposite direction, whence, by devious twists and turns, it came back to the first point of approach. To Una, at least, bewildered by the intricacies of cave topography, this seemed the explanation of the course they were pursuing, although the mysterious doubling of their tracks brought little consolation—especially when she realized that her uncle and his companions were lost in the center of a maze the clew to which completely eluded her. Anxiety for their safety overrode, for the moment, every other consideration; she grasped Narva's arm with a detaining gesture, a half uttered question on her lips. Her appeal, however, was not answered. Like some ancient oracle, from which has proceeded the final Pythian message, no further revelation was to be granted. In true sibylline fashion, with finger on lip and eyes set on some object in the distance hidden from Una, Narva indicated that the time for speech had passed and now it remained for them to carry out as expeditiously as possible, the design upon which they were setting forth. From her gesture and



the stealthy caution with which she advanced, Una gathered that there were urgent reasons for maintaining a strict silence. They might be surrounded by hostile forces, their destination might be a secret one, or at least a knowledge of it might involve danger to the man for whose preservation she firmly believed they were engaged. Narva, in warning her of this danger, hinted that whatever they had to fear was in some way due to the presence of Raoul Arthur in the cave. The enmity of the latter to Dávid, moreover, was full of sinister possibilities, and the conviction that they were about to foil the evil thus threatened nerved Una to face anything.

Una would have felt a stronger confidence in their mission, a keener enthusiasm, had Narva been more definite as to the identity of the man to whose rescue she believed they were hastening, or had she given some hint of the kind of danger to which he was actually exposed. But it was all so vague, she feared that some mistake had been made, a mistake easily growing out of the fervid imagination that, any one could see, quite controlled Narva's mind. While there was no shaking the old sibyl's reticence, however, the calm determination with which she set about her task proved, in a measure, inspiring. Una might feel an occasional doubt as to the outcome of their venture, but this doubt finally disappeared altogether before the faith, growing stronger with the changing aspect of the scene through which they were passing, that in some unlooked-for way she was about to attain the main object that had brought them into this ancient home of a vanished race.

They had now entered a portion of the cave where

the dim half-light to which Una was accustomed turned, by comparison, almost to the light of day. This light appeared to come from a fixed point directly in front of them. No central globe, or body of fire, to which this appearance might be traced was visible; but, in the far distance, where the light reached its greatest intensity, over the top of a dark ridge of rock rising before them like the summit of a mountain, thin streamers of white radiance shot upward, rising and falling in the unequal flashes and subsidences generated by an electric battery. This luminous appearance, however, was too stupendous in its effects to be attributable to a mere electric battery. To Una's dazzled vision it rather resembled the first onrush of the morning sun, when the presence of that luminary just below the horizon is proclaimed by advancing rays of light. Here, however, an effect of greater motion was produced than in the steady and gradual illumination of the heavens heralding the coming of the sun. The sparkles and flashes neither grew nor shrank in intensity. If they were produced by a central body corresponding to the sun that shone upon the outside world, it was a stationary sun, fixed in some mysterious, invisible recess of the cave.

And now the outlines of the distant mountain top began to assume a greater definiteness than before. Objects just below this furthest summit loomed up spectrally out of the shadows that had enveloped them; for the first time Una realized that they were facing, not a wall of unbroken rock, such as had overwhelmed her at every side since leaving her companions in Narva's dwelling, but an assemblage of majestic forms suggesting, in their coherence and symmetrical arrangement, the towers,

arches, and ramparts of some ancient citadel. This building, or collection of buildings, from their position and commanding aspect, might well be taken as the center of the region it so fitly dominated. Upon it converged all the lines, furrows and intricate masses of walls composing, so far as they could be included in one comprehensive view, the architecture of the cave. Immediately above it, crowning the very summit, arose a single tower, broad at the base, and tapering until it reached a sharp point just below the cave's jagged, overhanging roof. Behind this tower the light flashed and glowed so brilliantly the shaft of stone itself seemed to sparkle and transmit a radiance as if it were composed of some crystalline substance.

Moved by this fairy-like spectacle Una again implored Narva to tell her something of where they were going. What was this cave of wonders, that no man had ever heard of before, and into which they had stumbled by chance? What bygone secret of the earth was it connected with, what people were these who lived in it as in a world apart from all other worlds? Who was she, buried out of sight of all men, and yet talking to Una in her native tongue, and seemingly so familiar with all that concerned her? Why had she been waiting for them, where was she taking them? But to all Una's questions Narva vouchsafed no word of reply. Smiling to herself, she pointed in the direction of the light-crowned summit before them and hastened on, descending now into a valley where they soon lost sight of the vision that had offered so delightful a goal to their wanderings. Narva's gesture, however, and the tendency of the path they were taking assured Una that the distant palace—

its situation and noble architecture suggested nothing less than a palace, the regal abode of the ruler of all this realm of marvels—was their real destination, and it was left to her to imagine why Narva was guiding her thither. But the physical difficulties of the path they followed gave her scant opportunity for speculation. Chasms they had to cross whose depths Una would have shunned had it not been for the promise of some great achievement that would free them all from the dangers by which they were surrounded. In other places the path narrowed to a mere fissure between great walls of rock, and again it skirted the edge of a precipice that, in normal times, would have filled Una with horror. Moreover, there were moments when she fancied she heard, from the darkness beneath them, the shouts of a hurrying throng of people—an impression that might well be true since she had abundant evidence already that the cave was inhabited by a race whose number she had no means of knowing.

But this reminder of the presence of others in the cave besides her own party was more disturbing to Una than the physical obstacles and dangers immediately facing her. These could at least be met and overcome—but about an invisible multitude, their attitude toward them, their purpose in apparently following them, there was an indefiniteness that was altogether disheartening. As a matter of fact, she had no doubt these hidden cave-men were hostile; her previous experiences had filled her with a vague dread in that respect. This dread, also, was sharpened by the reflection that, in all probability, Raoul was among them; of his active enmity, linked in some mysterious manner with David's disappearance,

she now felt certain. Una tried to gain some light on the subject from Narva; but the latter either failed to hear the ominous sounds to which her attention was called, or she was too intent on her present mission to admit the consideration of other matters. This indifference, whether real or feigned, had a reassuring effect on Una. She perceived that if these invisible people, friendly or unfriendly, were connected with them, they would attract Narva's attention, while, if there was no connection—a conclusion suggested by the sibyl's unruffled bearing—there was nothing to fear from them.

Having reached the end of the abrupt downward slope of the path they were following, Una rejoiced to find herself on the level floor of a valley that, in the upper world, would be admired for its charm and restfulness. There were neither flower-decked meadows, it is true, nor brook-fed woodland to diversify the scene. Subterranean botany, however, has its compensations for losses due to the perpetual absence of sun and rain. Evidently the light from the luminous mountain had in it some life-giving, sustaining quality, for on every hand in this valley there were luxuriant growths of delicately tinted flowers—or so they appeared—whose scent, one imagined, filled the motionless atmosphere. Tall, graceful forms, resembling willows, clustered along the banks of a little stream flowing with the gentlest of murmurs through their midst. The flinty ground was carpeted with a pale lancet-leaved herbage that might have been taken for grass were it not for the profusion of sparkling crystals with which it was sprinkled. These crystals glowed in varying and sometimes iridescent colors, showing a depth and solidity of substance



decidedly out of keeping with a purely vegetable origin.

It was this gem-like appearance of what might have been taken elsewhere for richly flowering grasses that led Una to suspect the reality—judged by the standards of the world with which she was familiar—of this subterranean garden. A white flower, heavily streaked with crimson, from the heart of which long golden stamens were thrust in a drooping cluster, hung on its stalk conveniently near. Except for its coloring, and a square rather than spherical modeling of the calyx, it might easily pass for one of the lily family. To make sure Una plucked it. From the broken stem a tiny stream of water bubbled out, and the flower in Una's hands seemed to lose at once the soft shimmer of light that had played upon its petals only a moment before. Most extraordinary of all was the weight of the flower. Suspended from its stalk, it seemed the frailest, daintiest of objects; a blossom that the merest breeze could have tossed about at will. But Una found it as heavy as so much metal, or stone; and this, with the clinking together of its leaves as they were moved by her touch, revealed the startling character of subterranean botany. She was disappointed at first to find that this was not, in the ordinary sense of the word, a flower at all; but regret was quickly followed by curiosity as to the actual nature of the strange growth she held in her hands. Its unusual weight belied the delicacy of its outward appearance; the fires that had clothed its leaves with living tints, in dying seemed to have left behind the pallor of ashes. Nevertheless, it retained a strange, subtle beauty, odorless, undefinable. It might be a rare kind of stalactite—except that a stalactite had not its soft

brilliancy—or a sheaf of gems, one of the many that strewed this subterranean valley. Whatever it was, it reminded Una, however faintly, of the glories of the outer world—and she cherished it for this more than for its own beauty. Narva, roused for the first time from the spell of her own thoughts, shook her head in disapproval of what Una had done. Evidently she questioned her right to pluck the flower, for she motioned to her to throw it away.

“The Queen’s garden!” she exclaimed in tones of rebuke.

As this was the first definite intimation of their whereabouts, Una was quick to seize upon it. This mysterious queen, then, of whom Narva had vaguely spoken before, was really mixed up in their present expedition. She recalled Narva’s hint that, in some way, Una was to be of assistance to her, and she wondered whether this meant that they were bringing rescue of some sort to the queen, a possibility of high adventure she was far too young not to relish. A queen, moreover, who cultivated jewels—or something very like them—in her garden was worthy the best flowers of romance. At any rate, Una felt a new zest in the enterprise she was on and began to chafe at Narva’s leisurely dignity.

“It is plenty of time,” said the old Indian sternly, noting her impatience. “Have care.”

As she spoke she pointed straight ahead where the first direct rays from the mountain peaks flashed downward illuminating the massive building, just below the tower-crowned summit that, at a distance, had so completely won Una’s admiration. Seen close at hand, this building gained in beauty. Most of the cave dwellings, like the

one inhabited by Narva, were hollowed out of the walls composing this underground world. The palace, however, stood alone, surrounding a spacious court in the center of which played a fountain whose jets of water reflected, in a sheaf of myriad diamonds, the light glancing athwart it. The dazzling effect emphasized the architectural majesty of the building thus illuminated. This building was, for the most part, two stories in height, ornamented by innumerable turrets, with a square central tower rising above an arched entrance, the iron-bound doors of which seemed stout enough to withstand a siege. It was built throughout of stone, of a deep yellow tint, vivid, glistening, unlike anything Una had seen in the cave. So radiant it seemed, so full of light, adorned with such delicate tracery wherever the design of the architect admitted the play of ornament, it might have been a fairy palace, each stone of which had come into place over night with the waving of a wand. Narva pointed to a heart-shaped tablet just above the arched entrance, upon which was carved, in dark red stone, the figure of a condor, similar in design to the one that graced the main gateway to the inhabited portion of the cave.

"It is very old," she said. "It is the palace of my people many hundred years—ah! perhaps thousands—before the Spaniards drove them off the earth. Long ago, in those days, our kingdom was not in a cave. But here, always, was the secret palace of the zipa. Yes, we lived among the mountains then, and this was our place of refuge when other Indians from far off came to plunder us. It was here that our first zipa was brought for safety. He was only a few weeks old then. Hunters, lost on a high mountain, had found him in the

nest of a condor. How he came there no one has ever known. But his skin was perfectly white, not like ours; so that he could not have been born from one of our race. Perhaps a god had left him for the condors to take care of—or perhaps it was a condor, flying far out of sight of the earth, who found him in some hidden place in the sky, and brought him down here to be the ruler of the earth. But here he was guarded, here he grew up. And when he became a man, and conquered the people who used to fight with us and destroy our cities, and rob us of our wealth, and make slaves of us, he founded this Empire of the Chibchas. And it was after that, when he was old and had not much longer to live, that he built this great palace, to be the secret home of his children whenever their enemies became too strong for them. And over the gate of the palace, where you see, he placed his birth-sign, the Sign of the Condor—the secret sign of this under-world and of all his kingdom. But all of this was hundreds—ah! thousands—of years ago. And all those years this palace has stood and given protection to the children of that first zipa, he who was carried from the skies to be reared in the nest of a condor.”

The fanciful story, the fabulous antiquity claimed for the palace before her, increased the sense of unreality and mystery filling Una’s mind as she listened to Narva. The story itself was not unlike others of the kind, handed down from one generation to another, explaining the origin of some ancient South American race. In the telling of it Narva, for the first time, forgot her reserve, and her simple eloquence, her apparent belief in the quaint old fable she was telling, added greatly to its

impressiveness. And there stood the great palace before her, with its flying condor guarding forever the descendants of that mythical old zipa! Una was unable to go back in imagination to that primeval past, especially as it had to do with a country and a people of which she knew nothing. But the tale itself, and the grace and beauty of the palace about which it had been woven, reminded her of much that she had heard and read in other than Indian mythology and literature. Pageants from medieval legend, with their phantom castles in haunted forests, engaged her fancy as she listened. For the moment she half expected to see a troop of Arthurian knights, intent upon some mystic quest, issue forth from the stately portal, bringing with them a flash of vivid light and movement that as yet the picture lacked. A zipa she had never seen, had never heard of before—and even a condor filled a place in her imagination that was not much more real than that occupied by the roc, the giant bird of the Arabian tales. But neither Christian knight nor pagan zipa was here. The silence, now that Narva had finished her tale, was profound. The murmur of voices, distinctly heard a short time before, was lost in the distance. The apparent isolation of a building so rich in possibilities of usefulness, so well preserved architecturally, was its most inexplicable feature. Una was almost persuaded that the palace before her was uninhabited, abandoned. If it belonged, as Narva said, to the dim past of a vanished race, it stood now merely as a monument to forgotten greatness. Or—did it still serve as a refuge, a protection, to the descendants of that condor-born zipa of Narva's legend?



Then, suddenly, as Una was thinking of these ancient, far-off things, from one of the wings of the palace there rose the clear, high notes of a woman's voice in a melody not unlike the one Anitoo and his band had used for a marching song. But Anitoo's song had something of martial swing and vigor in it; this, although wild in spirit, permeated by the chanting, wailing quality characteristic of primitive music, thrilled with strains of passionate tenderness unlike anything Una had heard. The words of the song were not distinguishable, nor were they needed to convey the theme inspiring the invisible singer. The latter seemed to pass from joy to despair, rising again to a solemn pitch of intensity that partook of the dignity and earnestness of religious rhapsody. A pagan priest, presiding over ancient rites from which the faithful expect a miracle, might thus have modulated the notes of his incantation. As in all music of the kind, the emotion portrayed was simple, unmixed with the shadings and intellectual complexities that play so important a part in modern song. The voice interpreting this emotion showed no great degree of cultivation. Unskilled in the nicer subtleties of the vocal art, it depended upon a natural, unrestrained sincerity, enriched by a birdlike clearness and resonance, for its effects. Its plaintiveness, from the very first strains of the ringing melody, appealed deeply to Una.

Narva, alive to the sympathetic response aroused in her companion by the song, laid her hand gently upon Una's arm and drew her in the direction of the distant portion of the palace from whence, apparently, the notes came.

"Have care, say nothing!" she repeated impressively.

Una, still absorbed by the weird beauty of the scene and the strange legends with which it was connected, scarcely noted the reiterated warning. Her own spirit kindled with friendly warmth for the singer whose mingled joys and sorrows were so eloquently expressed. She followed Narva almost unconsciously, eager, and yet half afraid to reach the climax of their adventure; fearful, likewise, lest by some misstep or imprudence of theirs the spell of music should be broken.

No sign of life was visible in the great rambling palace that loomed high above them. The rows of lanceolated openings, that in the distance appeared to be ordinary windows, upon a nearer view proved to be unglazed—or, if they were fitted with glass it was too thick to reveal to an outsider the interior of the palace. That some kind of vitreous substance filled these openings was evident from the flashes of light reflected on their surface. Considering the antiquity of the building, however, and the unknown methods and materials employed by its architect, it was more likely that the substance used for windows was a crystal gathered, perhaps, from the queen's garden—the flower from those alluring bushes that had first caught Una's attention—rather than manufactured glass that must have been unknown to these Andean cavemen. Even though the first zipa was the reputed offspring of stars or condors, it was not likely that in building his palace thousands of years ago—to quote Narva's estimate—he had been able to fit it with modern improvements.

Owing to the thickness of these windows, therefore, it was impossible to make out anything of the interior of the apartments of the palace for which they were,

apparently, intended to serve for light. A close approach, right under the palace walls, revealed nothing more than could be seen at a distance; and as Narva avoided the great central entrance, it appeared to Una that the mystery which so fascinated her was to remain unsolved. An abrupt angle in the building, however, brought them suddenly within a little portico, extending between two massive towers jutting out from the main structure, the existence of which came as a complete surprise. On the side of this portico away from the palace clung a vine of pale green foliage, starred with white and crimson flowers similar to those in the Queen's Garden, forming with its delicate festoons a cloistered way that had a subtle attractiveness amidst the imposing lines and columns of the huge edifice rising above it.

Here Narva and her companion paused, listening to the wild melody coming to them in a clear rush of sound. At the other end of the portico, leaning against the side of a long latticed window standing partly open, they could see the singer, her face turned to the apartment within, one arm encircling a lyre-shaped instrument the strings of which were lightly touched by the fingers of her right hand. The long white drapery in which she was clothed scarcely stirred with the movement from her playing, while the upward poise of her head, with its masses of dark hair flowing downward over her shoulders, indicated the rapt intensity with which she voiced the passion of her song. Apparently she was alone. The semi-obscurity of the apartment, however, at the entrance to which she stood, might have screened effectively from an outsider any one who was within.

For the first few moments the appearance of Una

and Narva at the far end of the portico was unnoticed. Then, as the music died away, the singer turned and slowly approached them, her manner showing neither surprise nor displeasure at their presence. As her glance fell upon them Narva made a low obeisance with a gesture evincing the most profound self-abasement. In grace and majesty of bearing the being whom she thus saluted was worthy her homage. Tall and nobly proportioned, serene of countenance and of a faultless beauty, the deference of those about her seemed a natural tribute to her queenliness. That high rank belonged to her by right was suggested by a gold coronet encircling her head. In the center of this coronet gleamed an emerald of a size and purity rare even to Bogota, the land of emeralds. An engaging womanliness, however, softened the dignity of her carriage, the luster of this emblem of her royalty. To Narva, prostrate before her, she stretched out a hand with affectionate eagerness, speaking to her, at the same time, in a tongue unintelligible to Una.

Saluting her again with the utmost reverence, the aged sibyl apparently answered her questions. She then continued a voluble relation, the main purpose of which, as Una surmised, had to do with the finding of strangers in the cave. During this recital the being whom Narva addressed regarded Una intently, her gaze manifesting an interest she was at no pains to conceal. Having heard Narva to the end she slowly approached Una and, to the latter's amazement, spoke to her in English.

"I am Sajipona," she said. "Some call me Queen of the Indians; I am a queen; but, of my kingdom, this last home of my fathers is all that your people have left

me. Deep underground, hidden from all men, few there are who know of its existence—and we guard the secret, if need be, with our lives. Against our law you have ventured here. Why have you come?”

To the abrupt inquiry Una had no answer ready. She hesitated; then, recalling her mission, she returned the gaze of her questioner with an awakened courage that went well with her maidenly beauty.

“I seek one who is dear to me,” she replied.

“Why do you think he is here?” demanded Sajipona.

“Once, years ago, he was lost. It is said he was in this cave. Now he has disappeared again—and we look for him here. I know nothing of your law. You are good—I am sure of it—I beg of you to help me.”

The appeal was impulsively made. A smile of sympathy lighted the features of the queen, followed by a look of pain. Her cheeks paled, the hand, still clasping the lyre upon which she had been playing, trembled. Averting her gaze, she turned towards the window where she had first been standing.

“Why should I help you?” she said. “You have broken our law.”

“We didn’t know of your law. All we want is to find him.”

“If the man you seek is here of his own will, why should I help you find him? He may wish to remain unknown.”

“You do not know,” said Una eagerly. “A strange thing happened before. It may be—how can I explain? It all sounds so improbable!—it may be he is not himself.”

Sajipona laughed ironically.



"Strange indeed! And it will be hard for you to explain. How can he be not himself?"

"If he has forgotten—if he has lost his memory——"

"His memory? What riddles you talk! How does one lose one's memory? And if he has lost his memory, can you bring it back to him then?" asked Sajipona impatiently.

"I think he would remember me," said Una simply.

Sajipona's face showed her skepticism. "We shall see," she said.

"Then you know where he is? He is here?" cried Una.

But her question brought no direct response. Instead, Sajipona turned to the old Indian who, during this brief colloquy, had shown signs of uneasiness. She now placed her fingers to her lips and pointed with her other hand to the apartment in the palace whence Sajipona had just made her appearance.

"Yes," repeated the queen, "we shall see."

The three women turned to the open lattice window at the other end of the portico. Objects in the room beyond were at first indistinct, but as the eye became accustomed to the darkness the whole interior took on more definite outlines. Una could see that the apartment was furnished in barbaric luxury. Golden shields gleamed on the walls; hangings, rich in color and material, were draped from the ceiling; massive cabinets, ornately carved and encrusted with gold, stood in distant alcoves of the room. But all these curious evidences of a bygone art were barely noted, the attention being drawn to the one living occupant within. Lying on a sort of divan, at some distance from the window, was the figure,

apparently, of a man. He was moving restlessly, as if awaking from sleep. While Una looked, he rose and stood irresolutely in the center of the room, one arm flung across his face to shield his eyes from the light. Then, slowly walking to the window, as if looking for some one, his arm dropped to his side and, leaning across the lattice, he called:

“Sajipona!”

It was David.

## XVIII

### SUBTERRANEAN PHOTOGRAPHY

AT first he did not see Una. His glance wandered dreamily off in the distance and then, recalled, as if by the sudden disappearance of some idle fancy, fixed itself upon Sajipona. A smile of satisfaction passed over his features as he came out to meet her.

"Why did you stop singing?" he asked, in a voice that was almost inaudible. "I missed you."

"Some one is here to see you," she said, ignoring the question.

David turned to Una. One would have said that he had not seen her before, although in her presence he betrayed a strange sort of agitation. Their eyes met. He took the hand she eagerly stretched out to him, then slowly relinquished it, perplexed, vaguely conscious of the other's emotion.

"I'm certain I've seen her before," he said, half jokingly, half in irritation, addressing Sajipona, "but I can't remember when or where. For the life of me I can't tell who she is. As for her name, I ought to know that——"

"Una! Una! Surely you remember, David?"

"David! But of course you told her my name, Saji-

pona. Did you tell her your pretty fancy, about the El Dorado, the Gilded Man?"

"Surely, you remember my name—Una?"

"Una—Una," he repeated uneasily. "It sounds familiar—I'm sure I've heard it—but I can't exactly place it. Strange! How perfectly familiar it is; yet, I can't place it, I can't place it! It's a beautiful name—I'm sure I used to think so—and you are beautiful, too, Una!"

Her name, pronounced in the accents she loved so well, brought a flood of memories that, she felt, must thrill him too. And yet—there he stood before her, the David she had always known, but now subtly changed, troubled, unseeing. Amazement robbed her of words. He had forgotten her. To Sajipona, however, more keenly observant even than Una, it was evident that an undercurrent of recognition on the part of David was hopelessly held in check by sheer inability to remember. His manner, moreover, indicated a mental uneasiness, pain, that could not fail to excite sympathy.

"When you left us at Honda," began Una, "we expected to follow right after. Then we heard you had disappeared——"

Laughing mirthlessly, David placed both hands to his head in hopeless bewilderment.

"It sounds like some dream I might have had years ago. I can't make it real," he said deprecatingly. "It's no use—I can't remember. Indeed, I almost believe you are chaffing me. But—it's really too serious a thing to joke about. You will tell—Una," he added, addressing Sajipona, "how long I've been here, how kind you've been to me ever since I came back, so ill I could scarcely look out for myself."

"Ever since you came back?" repeated Una, seizing upon the clew. "Then you have not always been here? You know the world outside of this cave? You were here once before, and then went away? Where were you? Try to remember."

"Why, yes," said David, mystified more than ever; "of course I've been away. I remember moving about a great deal, visiting many countries, seeing many people. But I don't remember who any of them were—I can't recall a single thing plainly, not a name, not a face. Sajipona has tried to help me. She's very patient about it. But, so far, it has been no use—and it's painful, I can tell you, trying to remember these things. I feel comfortable, entirely at peace, only when Sajipona sings. There's nothing like her singing. I could listen to her forever, forgetting even to try to remember—if you know what that means."

"But I want you to remember," interrupted Sajipona. "You must try—never mind how painful it is. You know how much depends on that for both of us."

"Yes, I know. That's why I try. I believe that when I am entirely well again it will all come right. All those dark dreams and things that bother me now will be cleared away and I will be completely myself. Then it will be as you say. We will be perfectly happy together."

Involuntarily the two women looked at each other. David, standing between them, calmer than before, remained silent, unconscious of the effect of his words.

"You must explain what you mean," Sajipona said to him firmly, after a moment of irresolution.



Aroused from his reverie, he looked in perplexity from one to the other. Then his brow cleared and he laughed softly.

"Oh, yes! You see—Una—Sajipona is very beautiful; and she is just as good as she is beautiful. I owe her everything. When I am completely myself again, as I said, she has promised—— You see, I have told her that I——"

The words died away as he looked at Una. Her face showed neither anxiety nor surprise, but a deep tenderness and melancholy. At the sight of her he seemed to lose the thread of what he had to say. He was mystified, pitiably torn between the struggles of a memory that remained tongueless, and the realities of a situation that seemed, somehow, peculiarly unreal. Wistfully he held out his hand to the girl whose beauty thus moved him, then hastily withdrew it, turning as he did so to Sajipona.

"Your song was very soothing, my queen," he said ruefully. "I fear I am not quite myself as yet. Something is wrong—something new. This lady—Una—you will forgive me?"

"Try to remember," she said earnestly; "there's nothing to forgive."

"There's nothing to remember," he said disconsolately. "I have tried—but I begin to think it's all a mistake."

He turned abruptly, leaving them to go to the room whence he had come a moment before. As he reached the open window he paused irresolutely.

"You will not go?" he said, his eyes meeting Una's.

"David!" was all her answer.

He shook his head mournfully, hesitated, then slowly passed into the darkened chamber beyond.

The two women regarded each other in silence. In Sajipona's glance there was proud defiance; with Una anxiety had changed to determination. The wordless duel of emotions was interrupted by Narva, who, until now, had remained in the background. Upon David's withdrawal the old sibyl shook off her reserve and addressed herself reverently to Sajipona.

"His old enemy is here," she announced; "there is danger."

Narva's news did not bring the alarm that any one would have supposed it would bring. Instead, Sajipona's look of anxiety vanished. A flash of anger gleamed in her eyes. Then she smiled with an eager air of triumph, grasping the old Indian's arm as if urging her to say more.

"You mean the American, Raoul Arthur?" she asked. "Is he here? I want him. I have waited for him. But, I didn't see him. Are you sure that he is here?"

Narva shrugged her shoulders. "He comes for no good," she said. "At last he finds the way from Guatavita. He seeks treasure. With him are traitors to the Land of the Condor. He fought Anitoo. He conquered him. He is on his way to the palace. I heard him with his men on the iron path. They are many. Defend yourself, Sajipona! We have very little time."

The appeal was received exultantly. From Una, however, there came a cry of dismay.

"If there is danger," she exclaimed, "what will become of my uncle and the others?"

Narva chuckled to herself. "There is no danger to

them," she said. "The fat man will have trouble to run, and the old woman will die because she is always afraid."

Her grim humor fell on unappreciative ears. At Sajipona's rebuke she lapsed again into silence, first giving a grudging explanation of what she had done with the party of explorers. The latter, it appeared, were practically prisoners where Narva and Una left them. There they must remain, unless they were discovered by the hostile band that was believed to have invaded the cave, in which case their release would mean capture by Raoul and his men. The possible consequences of this increased Una's alarm, and at Sajipona's command Narva grumblingly set forth to effect their rescue. As success depended on her speed, Una was prevented from returning with her. She was thus left alone with Sajipona, whose plans regarding David now absorbed her attention. Here, however, she encountered a reserve which she could not break. Every attempt to gain information was repelled, and in a manner intimating that Una's interest in David was unwarranted by any previous friendship between them.

"He does not know you," exclaimed Sajipona exultantly, but with a note of uneasiness that was not lost on the other.

Una, concerned for David's safety, ignored the unspoken challenge.

"What is to become of him? Why is he here?" she demanded.

"What is that to you?" was the fierce retort. "He doesn't know even your name. He is happy. He depends on me."

"That may be. But there is a mystery. Tell me what it all means. If he is happy, if there is nothing more to be said or done, I will go. Only—tell me."

"You will not go—not until there is no longer a mystery, as you call it."

The announcement sounded like the sentence of a judge, from which there is no appeal. It reminded Una that she was in the power of one who had shown towards her an inflexible will. At the same time she was conscious of a softening in Sajipona's attitude that was both mystifying and reassuring. This beautiful Indian girl had at first resented Una's presence. She had regarded the other with queenly scorn, and had not disguised the jealous impatience kindled by the brief and futile interview with David. Now this impatience had given place to a deeper emotion that was less easily understood. It might be of kindlier import, an unexpected relenting from the harsh mood that apparently weighed Una's every word and act with suspicion. Still, it was possible that beneath this newly awakened generosity there lurked something sinister, a deliberate purpose to lead the other to a confession that would be her own undoing. Of this, however, Una had little fear. By nature trustful of those about her, she did not look for harm to herself from one so young, so beautiful, and who now, at any rate, appeared anxious to atone for her former enmity by a graciousness equally marked.

"There is nothing to fear," said Sajipona, as if reading her thoughts. "Narva will protect your people. There is danger only from your friend, this Raoul Arthur——"

"He is not my friend!" exclaimed Una.

Sajipona smiled. "We will soon see," she said. "This is the Land of the Condor, all that is left to an ancient race that once ruled over many nations. For centuries the poor remaining handful of my people have managed to live unknown in this little corner of the earth. You are the first—except one other—from the outside world to find your way into this forgotten kingdom. When you will be free to return to the outer world is not for me to say. But, you are here—my guest. Let us have it that way. This is my kingdom. Enter!"

They did not pass into the palace through the entrance used by David. Back of where they stood, at a word of command from Sajipona, a large door swung open, revealing a spacious court within flooded with a clear white light that left not a corner or angle in shadow. This light radiated from a central shaft overhead, at first indistinguishable in the dazzling intricacies of the ceiling that stretched away in tier upon tier of crystalline columns above them. Advancing to the middle of this court, under the queen's guidance, Una beheld, at the apex of the vast dome curving upward to a seemingly immeasurable distance, a large opening beyond which blazed a great ball of fire suspended, apparently, from the topmost pinnacle of the outer cave. The rays from this underground sun—for it is only as a sun that it can be adequately described—shone with an intensity that was fairly blinding. These rays flashed and sparkled in long, waving streamers of flame, disappearing and suddenly renewing their radiance with a ceaseless energy similar to that displayed by some gigantic dynamo whose emanations are produced by a concentration of power as yet unattempted by man. Fascinated by this



splendor, Una realized that she was standing beneath the great luminous body whose magical effects she had first witnessed while approaching the palace with Narva. Shielding her eyes from a spectacle that wearied by its vehemence, she turned to Sajipona. But Sajipona was not with her. Una stood alone in the center of the great court.

At another time this sudden isolation would have been alarming. But the many strange adventures experienced during the last few hours had accustomed Una to danger, so that the disappearance of Sajipona served merely to arouse her to a keener sense of her surroundings. Her faith in this beautiful Indian, moreover, was not easily shaken, in spite of the repellant attitude she had first assumed towards her. Treachery from such a source, it seemed to her, was inconceivable.

Stepping back from the direct rays of the great ball of fire, the manifestations of whose mysterious power had until then absorbed her attention, Una found herself in the midst of a throng of people, all of them, apparently, watching her. By their dress, simple and flowing as that worn by the followers of Anitoo, she perceived these were cave men and women, some forty or fifty in number, each one standing motionless along the wall farthest from her. With heads bent forward and arms outstretched towards the center of the court, where Una stood, they appeared to be engaged in some sort of devotional exercise, the visible object of which was a great round disk of gold set in the tessellated pavement that flashed beneath the light pouring upon it from above. Inlaid within this disk, at the outer rim of which she had been standing a moment before, Una could now

discern cabalistic figures wrought in emeralds whose deep effulgence was in striking contrast with the haze of golden light surrounding them. The intricate design formed by these figures was difficult to trace, but that each figure, and the pattern into which it was woven, bore a mystical meaning was suggested by the reverence with which this whole glittering pool of light was regarded by the silent throng.

Eagerly Una scanned the white-robed worshipers before her, hoping that among them she might discover David. Not finding him, she sought Sajipona, with the same disappointing result at first. Then her gaze, wandering away from these strange faces, rested upon a slightly elevated platform at one end of the court. There, beneath a gold and gem-encrusted canopy, seated upon a massive throne of pure crystal, she beheld the Indian queen.

From the first Una had felt the spell of her beauty, but its force had been tempered by the flashes of anger, the suspicion, the disdain that had alternately marked their intercourse. Now, although arrayed and staged, as it were, in all the splendor belonging to her high station—with crown and scepter and glittering robe of state—this proud beauty had softened to an almost girlish loveliness, wistful, touched with a melancholy as hopeless as it was appealing. That she was a queen, aloof from those about her, seemed strangely pathetic. Nor did this expression of sheer womanliness change as her eyes met Una's. Across the width of the great presence chamber a mysterious wave of sympathy seemed to bind these two together. Completing its wordless message, Sajipona arose and stood expectantly while Una ap-

proached, the throng before her silently falling back until she reached the foot of the throne. Then, with hands clasped in greeting, the two women faced each other, the enmity that first had sundered them apparently forgotten, or, at the least, held in check by some subtler, purer feeling. Again Una wondered if this could be genuine—if the suspicion with which she had been regarded at first might not still lurk behind this outward graciousness. Little versed in the arts of dissimulation, however, and apt to take for current coin whatever offered of friendliness, she accepted this unlooked-for warmth of welcome with undisguised gratitude. Sajipona drew her gently forward until the two stood side by side on the platform facing the great court, the silent groups of attendants below them. The dazzling light, the flashing splendor of columned walls and vaulted ceiling, the white-robed figures, the jeweled throne, furnished forth a faery spectacle not easily forgotten.

"These are my people," said Sajipona proudly. "They will protect you as they protect me."

As if in answer to her assurance the waiting courtiers, absorbed until now in the contemplation of the mystical figures within the circle of light at their feet, slowly turned and made grave obeisance before the two women standing in front of the throne. Following this sign of submission, they came forward as if expectant of some further command. Sajipona smilingly watched the effect of this ceremony on her companion.

"Ah! it is not here as in Bogota," she said, "or in the world where you come from, far from Bogota. You think all this that you see is unreal—a dream, perhaps. My people are so different from yours—and all these many

years they live forgotten, unknown. I have lived in Bogota. There they do not know of this great cave that belonged to the ancient rulers of the mountains. They don't know that I am queen here, or of this palace that is mine—and the light that burns like the sun. Ah! I wonder what your wise uncle will say when he sees our sun!"

Sajipona laughed noiselessly, with the half-concealed delight that a child hugs to itself when it hides some simple secret from the eyes of its elders. Una, more bewildered than ever at this allusion to Leighton, sought vainly for a reasonable explanation of the marvels surrounding her.

"My uncle!" she exclaimed. "How do you know that he is wise—and he is!—and that he is here? Yes, this sun of yours—what is it, where does it come from?"

Again Sajipona laughed.

"Remember," she said, "this is not Bogota. Out there it is all very wonderful, very great. You have the sky, the sun, the stars. The mountains stretch away as far as the eye can see; there are plains, cities; and there are buildings greater than any we have here. This is a toy world, you will say, even when you think some things in it very wonderful. But you do not guess the half of what is here. In this world my people have lived in secret for centuries. They have discovered things that even the wisest of your people know nothing of. We have eyes that see everything that happens in our world of stone, eyes that pierce through the stones themselves. I knew when you came into our kingdom; I watched you when you passed through the great gate

where the others were fighting. But—you don't believe me. Come, I will show you."

Sajipona gave her hand to the astonished girl and the two stepped down from the platform where they were standing and made their way to the center of the court. Here the great circle of light cast by the ball of fire overhead gleamed at their feet like an unruffled pool of sun-kissed water. At the rim of this circle they halted, Sajipona gently restraining her companion, who, in her eagerness, would have passed on.

"Look there on the floor," she said. "Your eyes may not be as ours; perhaps you will have to wait before you can see. But it will come—you will see."

Una remembered how she had heard—and laughed—of magicians who pretended to read the future by gazing into a crystal globe. The experiment to which she was now invited seemed like that, only here it was apparently a huge mirror of reflected light that she was told to watch, while no word had been said of finding therein a revelation of things to come. Nor could she see anything in this mirror at first. Waves of light, tongues of leaping flame, passed over the polished surface of the metal, here darting off in long zigzag streaks, there forming a sort of pool of molten, quivering fluorescence, as the physicists call it, varying in size and color, then vanishing utterly. Much the same appearance Una remembered having seen on the surface of a copper kettle when subjected to intense heat. But in this case there was no perceptible heat to account for the phenomenon, which was rather electric in its fantastic weavings—a reduplication, on a gigantic scale, of the wavering finger of light that she had watched play, with such fatal results, on



her uncle's electric psychometer. The resemblance, recognized with a shudder, intensified her interest. The succession of marvels through which she had been passing prepared her for anything. In her present mood, nothing would have surprised her.

"What is it? What is it?" she asked eagerly.

Sajipona followed the twisting maze of figures before them with unwonted anxiety. Her usual calm demeanor was gone. She appeared to be reading something the purport of which was not at all to her liking.

"Look!" she exclaimed. "There he is. They have let him pass through the gate. He is coming here. Anitoo's men are with him."

To Una the words were meaningless. Yet she knew that her companion was reading, or, rather, witnessing something that was passing before her own eyes, and that hence should have been quite as visible to her—if only she had the clew. But this she did not have. She recognized the hint of danger. She knew that in some way Sajipona had caught a glimpse of some one whom she counted an enemy. She felt that this person was in some way connected with her own party; and then the thought of Raoul Arthur flashed across her mind, at the same time that his veritable image—so it seemed—stood forth in wavering lines of light at her feet.

"Save David from him!" she cried involuntarily.

"You see him—you know him!"

"He came in with us. He is there—look! I don't know by what invisible power you have conjured up this apparition, but it is real. He is the one man I have feared—and he is coming here!"

Sajipona laughed softly to herself.

"Ah!" she cried, "now you have our secret. Here in this ancient hall, under this sun we have worshiped for countless ages, nothing is hidden. But the man you fear, that you see there, will bring freedom to us both."

Whatever Sajipona meant by her enigmatical words, the fact was there, the living, moving likeness of Raoul Arthur, in the light-woven tapestry at Una's feet. Eagerly she watched him. It was certainly Raoul, Raoul hurrying towards her, growing more distinct, more threatening with every moment. Behind him streamed a shadowy line of men—swiftly, confidently—following a trail amid the jagged rocks and precipices of the cave that might well have daunted the boldest spirits, but which seemed powerless to retard their progress. As Una's eyes became accustomed to the shifting panorama before her, sundry details came into view that at first had been unnoticed. She was familiar with the curious phenomena wrought by the camera obscura, and this singular portrayal on the gleaming floor of Sajipona's palace seemed at first not unlike that simple method of reproducing objects invisible to the spectator. But as the present picture grew and then faded away, to be followed by others in this magic pool of light, she knew that what she now beheld was quite beyond the power of the cunningly placed lens used in experiments with the camera obscura to portray. The latter, she remembered, could reproduce objects only when they came within a certain definite distance from the lens itself. But here Raoul Arthur and his companions moved across a constantly changing, lengthening space. Moreover, she recognized the path they were following as the one over which she had traveled at a point far away from the

palace. They had reached, indeed, the very spot where she and Narva had first caught sight of that topmost pinnacle of the cave, behind and above which flamed the great ball of fire, the sun of this subterranean world. As Sajipona's palace stood at the base of this pinnacle, she calculated, from her own experience of the journey, that Raoul and his followers were coming directly towards them.

"There is nothing to fear," resumed Sajipona, as if in answer to her thoughts. "Be glad of their coming. But—for your own people I am afraid."

"Ah, my poor uncle! I have brought him into all this danger," exclaimed Una. "Where is he? How can I save him?"

"Look!"

Eagerly studying the portion of the picture indicated, Una suddenly found, to her horror, that Raoul, with that vague, shadowy rabble at his heels, was approaching another group of people, just ahead, among whom she recognized the gaunt figure of Narva, evidently exasperated by the inability of the others to keep pace with her. Even in the uncertain lines of the picture the scorn darkening the features of the old sibyl was easily discernible. Behind her tottered Mrs. Quayle, waving her arms in helpless protest, supported by the faithful Andrew, whose face showed an even greater degree of woe and alarm than usual. They were closely followed by Leighton, imperturbable as ever, and Miranda, whose irascible rocketing from one side to the other of the narrow trail, and whose violent gesticulations manifested all too plainly his indignation. Had it not been for her companions Narva could easily have outstripped her pursuers; but

with so timorous a person as Mrs. Quayle this seemed impossible. The hopelessness of it, in spite of all his scolding and prodding, had evidently convinced Miranda of the necessity for a change of tactics. Further flight being a mere waste of energy, there was left the alternative of parleying with the enemy. Hence, without stopping to consult with General Herran, who still suffered, apparently, from his wound, and who plodded patiently along immediately behind Leighton, the doctor suddenly came to a standstill. This unexpected halt very nearly toppled over the others, who were pressing on as hard as they could go and found it difficult to stop on the instant. But Miranda did not heed the ludicrous disorder into which he had thrown them. Facing quickly about, and with arms impressively folded, he bestrode the narrow path as if defying any one who might be foolhardy enough to challenge him. At a distance, and without hearing the torrent of abuse with which he evidently greeted his pursuers, the fiery doctor resembled a small terrier disputing the right of way with a pack of hounds hot on their quarry. What he lacked in physical presence, however, Miranda made up in energy. Undaunted he stood his ground, the men whom he addressed halting with astonishment depicted on their faces. Then, most amazing of all, he wheeled about, placed himself at their head and, waving them forward, strutted along as if he had been their chosen leader.

Amused and impressed by his boldness, the men were apparently willing at first to accept Miranda for their commander. He furnished them with a new kind of entertainment, and for the moment, and just because they did not understand him, it seemed as if they recog-

nized in him a superiority they were not loath to follow. But Raoul's leadership was not to be so easily superseded. Quickly thrusting Miranda aside, breathless and triumphant from his exertions, the wiry American angrily harangued his troops. He threatened the foremost of them with a pike that he held in his hand, and by their downcast looks and passive demeanor, it was evident that his words and gestures had brought them back to a recognition of his authority. Miranda, still shouting and gesticulating, was ignominiously left to shift for himself, while the cavemen, obeying Raoul's command, swept onward until they reached the stupefied group of explorers ahead of them. Here another halt was ordered, and Raoul pointed out Mrs. Quayle to his men. Four of the latter promptly left the ranks of their comrades, went forward at a round trot, seized the horrified lady, and swung her up to their shoulders before she knew what was happening, or had time to defend herself. Thus carried by two of the men and held in place by the other two, she was speedily brought into line not far behind Raoul. Leighton evidently protested against the sudden capture of Mrs. Quayle, for whose safety he felt peculiarly responsible. But his appeal was waved scornfully aside. The rest of the explorers, Miranda included, seeing that further resistance was futile, and that they were virtually Raoul's prisoners, hopelessly resigned themselves to their fate and followed along with the others. A signal was then given, and the entire throng marched rapidly down the trail to the palace. Narva, however, was not among them. In the commotion that took place during the altercation with Miranda, and the subsequent seizure of Mrs. Quayle, she had disappeared.



As the last figures in this strange picture faded from view, Sajipona seized Una's arm. The waving streams of light reflected on the floor had again become meaningless. It was as if a dream had suddenly passed before them, leaving them, as sleepers awakening, uncertain of the reality of what they had witnessed.

"Who is he?" asked Sajipona—"the stout man who so nearly captured these traitors?"

"A friend, a doctor, who came with us."

"He is brave! But it is strange that this Raoul Arthur could free himself so easily from Anitoo. He must have killed my poor Anitoo to do that. But your friend was nearly too much for him! Never mind if he failed. They will soon be here. Let us be ready!"

Then, turning to her attendants who stood in a circle at a distance from them, she cried:

"Open the door!"

Obedying her command, two of the cavemen hurried to the farther end of the hall. There was a muffled sound of grating stone, and then the two leaves of the great portal swung slowly open, revealing the glittering, silent garden of the palace beyond.

## XIX

### A QUEEN'S CONQUEST

**S**URROUNDED by her people, the ancient diadem of the Chibchas, with its great, smouldering emerald, on her head, Sajipona waited at the entrance to the court. Without, the motionless flowers and shrubbery of the garden were steeped in a pale, quivering light outlining every object with a weird intensity sharper, yet more indefinable than gleams from moon-drenched skies. In this spectral scene the cavemen stood in rows, like carven statues; even Sajipona, mobile, versatile of mood, seemed a woman of marble.

But Una, stirred profoundly by the picture she had seen, doubtful of its reality, not altogether sure of her own ground, aware of the dangers that threatened, but ignorant of their exact character, could not hide her anxiety. Seizing Sajipona's hand, her eyes were eloquent of unspoken questioning. Her mute appeal was answered by a wistful smile, a glance at once gracious and sorrowful.

"For you there is no danger," said the queen. "For me—yes, for me there is, perhaps, danger."

"How can that be?"

"You fear this Raoul Arthur. It is not for you, it is for me he has come. For three years he has plotted to

do this thing. My own kinsman, Rafael Segurra, was in league with him. Before now he has attempted to force his way here. The two together found their opportunity in your coming. And now—Arthur has escaped from his captors and again seems to have found traitors among my people.”

“What is it he wants?”

“You ask that—you who know David!”

For a moment the anger and suspicion with which she had first regarded Una kindled in Sajipona’s eyes. But the mood vanished as quickly as it came.

“Surely, you remember what Narva said,” she went on. “He seeks treasure. He sought it with David three years ago, the poor treasure belonging to what is left of my people. Segurra told him where it was, how to get it.”

“Ah, yes!” exclaimed Una. “Now I know! The treasure of Guatavita, of El Dorado, it is here.”

“It is here—it is mine!” said Sajipona sternly. “It will never be his. Always your people have fought for it, have sinned and died to make it theirs. They have driven us off the face of the earth, to hide for centuries in this cave and in that other land that as yet you know nothing of. Here we have made our world—and we will keep what is ours, unless David——”

The words died on Sajipona’s lips. At the far end of the garden the heavy branches of spectral shrubbery swayed and parted, revealing a majestic figure hastening toward them. It was Narva. Gliding along the pathway, she showed an agitation contrasting strangely with her accustomed reserve. Reaching the entrance to the

palace, she pointed behind her, at the same time addressing the queen in words unintelligible to Una.

"Yes, they are coming," said Sajipona, smiling composedly. "It is well. There is nothing to fear."

Narva had arrived none too soon. As she spoke to the queen, shouts were heard in the distance, and then the tramp of approaching footsteps. Sajipona advanced to the threshold of the palace, where, signing to the others to remain behind, she stood alone, awaiting the noisy intruders. Her defenseless position brought bitter protest from Narva that was supported by a movement among the others to protect their queen. This was quickly rebuked; and when Raoul, his followers and the explorers poured into the garden they were confronted by a group of men and women who gave no sign of uneasiness at their arrival.

It should be noted here that, in spite of his defeat, pictured in the pool of light, Miranda had by no means relinquished his efforts to gain control of Raoul's men. He had followed along at their side, irrepressible in his attempts to hold their attention—a sort of gadfly whose persistent teasing nothing can stop. Raoul would have put an end to him, once and for all; but in this he found that his men, pacific by nature and training, would not uphold him. Miranda's rotund figure, vehemence, spasmodic energy, the unmitigated scorn with which he regarded all who differed from him, delighted them. He enjoyed the sort of immunity from punishment granted the old-time court jester. The cavemen liked him because they could never tell what he was going to do next. The novelty of so dynamic a personality appealed to their sense of humor. Thus, when they were all assembled in

the garden, the little doctor's next move was awaited with eagerness. To their astonishment, the flourish expected of him was not forthcoming. Instead, he stood stock still, folded his arms across his chest with all the Napoleonic dignity he could muster, and glared at Raoul.

This extreme composure, however, was not shared by the rest of the explorers. At the first glimpse of Una, standing immediately behind Sajipona, Mrs. Quayle gave a shriek of joy and collapsed into the arms of the schoolmaster, whose own emotions made him a sorry support at the best. Leighton, on the contrary, accompanied by Herran, strode quickly forward and would have reached the threshold of the palace, had he not been waved imperiously aside by Raoul, who now summoned his followers about him, formed them into a close phalanx and advanced rapidly across the garden. When they were within a hundred yards of the palace, they were suddenly met by two men of gigantic stature, who calmly ordered them to halt. Raoul was less intimidated than his followers, who recognized in this unexpected challenge an authority they were accustomed to obey. The two men confronting them evidently belonged to the priesthood. They were distinguished from the rest of Sajipona's courtiers by their dress, adorned by various symbolical figures embroidered in red and gold, and by two wands, each surmounted by an emerald, which they carried in their hands. Although without military backing, weaponless except for these wands, Raoul saw with dismay that the mere presence of these men excited the respect, and even the homage, of those about him. Many bowed before them; a few showed an unmistakable disposition to



abandon their enterprise altogether and take refuge in flight. Before this movement could become general, however, they were arrested by the appearance of Sajipona in their midst.

Descending the steps of the palace, the queen, attended only by Una and Narva, came swiftly forward to meet them. Her bearing, the proud majesty of her beauty, caused a murmur of admiration throughout the ranks of the cavemen that was punctuated by a hearty shout from Miranda, who watched the troubles of Raoul with unrestrained delight. It was not often, indeed, that the rank and file of the Land of the Condor came face to face with their queen. When they did so, the meeting aroused a profound feeling of pride and loyalty. Raoul, seeing the effect Sajipona had upon his men, and already disconcerted by the reception accorded the two priests, had no mind for further encounters that might cost him his entire following. In the outside world, faced by a similar danger, he would have retreated. But here, in the midst of a subterranean labyrinth of unknown extent, retreat was impossible. The alternative was a bold rallying of his forces, a sudden rush for the prize he had ventured so far to win. Turning upon his men, he denounced them savagely for their apparent change of purpose, their cowardice.

"You will remain slaves!" he cried tauntingly. "We have your tyrants in our power. All you need do for your freedom is to follow me and take what belongs to you."

There were enough who understood his words to translate them to those ignorant of Spanish, and the immediate effect produced on these people, vacillating by nature,

ever ready to yield to the strongest personality that appealed to them, was not far from that intended. Spears, knives, blowguns were brandished, a score or more men leaped forward uttering cries of triumph—and again the attack planned by Raoul seemed fairly under way and with a reasonable prospect of success. It was checked—but only for an instant—by a clamorous protest from Miranda. The latter, blazing with indignation, bounded to the front, gesticulating and menacing all who were within his reach.

“He is one canaille, this fellow!” he shouted. “He fight with the womens. He take from you all you have. Do not be estupid. He lie! He lie!”

This outburst astonished more than it convinced those to whom it was addressed. As Miranda spoke in a mixture of English and Spanish, scarcely any one understood what he said. In another moment he would have been swept derisively aside, had not Sajipona quietly interposed. Pointing at Raoul, she spoke a few words to the cavemen in their native tongue. Then she turned to the man whose armed presence at the doors of her palace, threatened her authority, if not her life.

“So! This is the man who, a short time ago, I saved from death at the hands of an angry mob!” she said scornfully. “You did not come to my house then, Don Raoul, as you come now. And yet—if I order these men, whom you think are your followers, to treat you as that other mob would have treated you, they would obey me. Be sure of that! And now, tell me: what have you done with Anitoo?”

Raoul hesitated a moment, then answered sullenly: “He attacked me. I killed him in self-defense.”

The reply was only half understood by the cavemen; but the attitude of Raoul, contrasted with the majestic bearing and composure of Sajipona, had already aroused their indignation.

"It may have been, as you say, in self-defense—I have only your word for it. But, for the treachery, the rebellion you have brought here," the queen went on, "by all the laws of our kingdom you should die. But I have something I wish you to do. If you do it, your life will be spared and you will be taken in safety from this cave never to enter it again."

Sajipona checked the tumult that she saw rising among the cavemen, and spoke a few words to them.

"I have told them," she explained, turning to Raoul, "that I knew of your coming—as I did. I have told them I have something for you to do before you are expelled from our kingdom. And I have pledged my word for your safety—although none of the men you have led here against me seem to care what happens to you. And now you will come with me."

There was a murmur of approval. Raoul looked fearfully at his followers. Their submission to the commands of the woman they were accustomed to obey was sufficiently evident to destroy his last hope for even a divided authority. Neither—for he was ignorant of their language—could he tell just what had passed between them and Sajipona. He was glad to accept, however, the queen's promise of safety; and this, coupled with a desire to get to the bottom of the mystery that had tantalized him since he first met this strange and fascinating being, reconciled him to the enforced abandonment of his schemes for the conquest of a subterranean

stronghold into which he had ventured too far to retreat. He therefore bowed his head to Sajipona's commands and prepared to do as she directed. His submission was greeted with ironical approval by Miranda, who now waddled forward impatiently, dragging Leighton with him, to enter the palace. But in this he was prevented by Sajipona.

"Senor, Doctor," she said, pleasing his vanity by her knowledge of his professional title, "you must wait. There is much to be done. You are a fine general. You have helped save this palace, my kingdom and all of us from ruin. I am very grateful. Soon you will have everything that you want. And you and your friends will return to your own country in safety."

This unexpected check, although expressed in terms that were highly pleasing to Miranda's vanity, was received with a grumbling protest.

"But, Senorita," he expostulated; "this young lady is here. I look for her everywhere in this cave. I am her family. She must come back to us."

"Not yet," was the calm reply. "Very soon, yes. But now she will stay with me."

There was a finality about this way of putting things that dashed even Miranda's impetuosity. Leighton, silently watching the brief altercation, and perceiving that Una, who still remained where Sajipona had left her, was perfectly calm and in no need of their assistance, exerted himself to restrain her headstrong champion. This was no easy matter, and the struggle between the two was watched with a covert smile by Sajipona. With the help of Herran and Andrew, however, Miranda's opposition was finally overcome. After which, without

waiting to hear the tirade that, she could see, the doctor was ready to launch, the queen, followed by Raoul, turned to the palace. Regaining the entrance, she faced them once more and waved a farewell to the silent throng in the garden. Then, giving her hand to Una, she passed within, the great doors clanging behind her.



## XX

### LEGEND AND REALITY

AS soon as she reëntered the palace, Sajipona dismissed her courtiers, the cavemen who acted as guards, and even the few female attendants she was accustomed to have near her. Of her own people, Narva alone remained.

Facing Raoul and Una in the deserted hall, flooded with light from the magic sun that a short while since had traced in moving characters of fire the approach of her enemies, Sajipona told of her purpose in bringing them there. She spoke as if she had long foreseen and even planned this interview, and amazed them by her intimate knowledge of various matters that seemed quite beyond the reach of her sources of information. It was as if she had been thoroughly familiar for some years past with Raoul's schemes, and had even shared in the hopes and fears that brought Una to Colombia.

"I knew of your coming; I planned for it," she said to Raoul. "For months I have known that you were using every art your cunning could suggest—aided by the treachery of one of my own people—to find your way here. Until now you have been unable to do anything. I was always able to keep you out of here—and I could still have kept you out, had it not served my purpose

better to let you come. You are here now—you are looking for what you have always looked. You guessed, long since, of the existence of a great treasure house, built here centuries ago by the rulers of our mountain kingdom who disappeared before the white invaders of this country. Idle stories and legends of those far off times, repeated to you by the peons whom you questioned, vague hints and romances picked up from ancient books, led you to this cave and to the belief that I was, in some way, mixed up with its secret. I will not say that you were right or wrong in all of this. Here you look for a mountain of treasure; as yet you have found none. But you have seen marvels enough since you entered this unknown region to make you eager to solve a mystery that every moment has grown deeper. I will help you—but it must be in my own way, and just so far as it suits my own plans.

“Once, we who live here now shut out from all the rest of the world, were free. We overran all the plains and mountains of Bogota, our rule extended to the warmer countries on every side of us. We practiced arts, cultivated sciences, were familiar with secrets of nature that our conquerors were too rude, too ignorant to understand. But these conquerors excelled us in warfare; and so we were driven either into slavery or hiding. It is in memory of that former age of freedom and empire that my people have called this the Land of the Condor—that, and a strange old legend that you may have heard of. Here we are hidden far, as you know, from the light of the upper earth. A miracle of nature carved this land out of the rock; the science and art of a race older than yours have furnished it and made it what you see. It

is guarded, as you know to your cost, by many a labyrinth, strongholds that have baffled you every time you have tried to pierce them. Its people live by means and methods that are forgotten—if they were ever known—to the outer world. Here we have been free to follow the customs and beliefs of our fathers. Here we could still continue a peaceful mode of life you know nothing of. But something has happened that has changed all this. Because of it I have at last permitted, even aided your coming to us. I know all you have sacrificed for this treasure you hope to win from the depths of the earth—treasure that belongs to us. I will not say that your search will be rewarded. Had you succeeded in your plan years ago you would have paid dearly for it. The knowledge of this hidden land would have been forever lost to you. Good fortune—or ill—has brought you here at last. Your fate lies now in the hands of the man you once tried to injure. But there is one thing you must do before his decision can be given. You must free him from a tyranny that, with all our knowledge of mankind's perils and weaknesses, we are powerless to overcome."

The demand, vague though it was, did not surprise Raoul. Upon learning of David's disappearance on the road from Honda to Bogota, he guessed that the missing man had found his way, by some inexplicable method, to this subterranean world, thus repeating his almost fatal adventure of three years ago. This surmise, based on the past, and on indications of similar abnormal mental symptoms that he believed David had again experienced, was corroborated by the cavemen who accompanied him to the palace. From these cavemen he learned that David had been followed by Sajipona's emissaries

ever since his arrival in Honda. These people intended neither his capture, nor to interfere with whatever plans he might have. Instead, they had formed a sort of secret guard, instructed to watch him and report, so soon as they could ascertain it, his purpose in revisiting Bogota. When he was separated from Herran by the regiment of volunteers on the Honda road, he was found in a state of mental bewilderment, not conscious, apparently, that he had lost his traveling companions, but anxious to find his way to some place, which he vaguely described. While in this condition he seemed to recognize the cavemen with whom he was talking. Aided by their hints and suggestions, his recollection of the cave, and especially of Sajipona, grew in vividness. He appeared to remember nothing of Herran, nor of his immediate object in visiting Bogota. But he spoke with increasing clearness of the Land of the Condor. He recalled what had befallen him there three years ago as if it had happened quite recently, and declared he was looking for Sajipona, of whom he spoke with the greatest admiration and gratitude. As he was uncertain of his way, he asked the cavemen to guide him. This, of course, they were ready to do, although they were completely mystified by the sudden oblivion into which, apparently, all his present friends and purposes had fallen in his mind. Sajipona alone he remembered. Three years had passed since he last saw her—but the events crowded into those three years seemed to have left not the slightest trace on his memory. He described his first visit to the cave; but the time between that period and this remained a blank in his mind.

All this Raoul had gathered from the cavemen who, re-

verting to the Indian belief in such matters, declared that David was bewitched. In a sense, Raoul knew this to be true. He knew also that the spells wrought by modern witchcraft were easily broken by any scientist holding the clew to them. That the cavemen, who possessed secrets in physics unknown to the outer world, should be ignorant of the simplest phenomena of hypnotism was not extraordinary. Even Sajipona shared, to a certain extent, the superstitions of those around her regarding David. She expected Raoul to break the "enchantment" under which David suffered. Una, familiar with Leighton's experiments and speculations in this field, was quite as confident as the queen that the case was within Raoul's power. Raoul alone realized the possible consequences following David's return to normal consciousness.

"Even if I could do as you say," he asked, "why would you have David changed?"

"As he is now, he is not himself."

"No, he is not himself," repeated Una eagerly.

Sajipona's cheek paled; her lips tightened as if to prevent an angry rejoinder.

"Are you not content with him as he is?" persisted Raoul.

"What is that to you?" she asked coldly. Then, no longer disguising her emotion, she went on:

"You don't understand what is between us. He comes from a world that I have never seen. In the legends of our kings there is one telling of a stranger who suddenly appears from a land of clouds—a land no man knows—who brings with him the power to make my people, as they once were, rulers of their own land. It is an old tale. Believe it or not—who can be sure of these things?



Certainly, the stranger has never come—unless it is David.”

“There have been many strangers since that time,” said Raoul cynically. “Your people have disappeared before the Spaniard. They live unknown, forgotten, in a cave in the mountains. Why do you think David is the stranger in the legend?”

She drew herself up scornfully. Her dark beauty, flashing eye, quivering nostril, needed not the emerald diadem of the ancient Chibchas encircling her brow to proclaim her royal lineage.

“We are not so poor, so abandoned, as you seem to think,” she said. “This is all that is left of a mighty kingdom, it is true—a cave unknown to the rest of the world. But here we are, at least, free. We live the life of our fathers. Our old men have taught us wisdom that is unknown to you. We have wealth—not only the wealth that you are seeking—but secrets of earth and air you have never dreamed of.”

“This may be—I believe it is—all true. But—what is David to do here?” murmured Una.

“If he is the Stranger of the old legend, the Gilded Man we have awaited, this Land of the Condor is his.”

“You are its queen.”

“He will be its king.”

“You have told him?” asked Raoul.

“Years ago. We were happy. I loved him. It was not as the women of your world love. Life was less than his least wish. And he loved me. Plans for the great rejoicing—the Feast of the Gilded Man—were made. Not since the Spaniards came—perhaps never before—has there been such preparation. Then, a change came

over him. He talked of an outside world he had seen in his dreams. He was bewitched then, as he is now. He had forgotten you, his false friend, and all the life he had lived before. To cure him, I sent him out with some of our people. He scarcely understood, but he accepted anything I did as if it came from his own will. Then he disappeared. Without a word he left me. There came long years of uncertainty. The few months he passed with me here seemed like some bright dream that vanishes. I began to think it was a dream—when suddenly I heard of him again. Some of my people found him wandering aimlessly in the forest near the Bogota road. He was looking for me, he said—he had forgotten the rest of the world.”

There was an artless simplicity in Sajipona’s confession of her love and disappointment that was more than eloquence. Narva stood apart, her face shrouded in her mantle, motionless, as if the remembrance of these bygone matters carried with it something of a religious experience. Upon Una the effect was startlingly different. She listened in amazement, indignation, at this revelation of a passion in which her lover had shared—of which she had known nothing—and that seemed to place him utterly apart from her. If Sajipona’s tale was true—the manner of its telling, her own engaging personality, carried irresistible conviction—David’s love for Una had been shadowed all along by an earlier, deeper sentiment that gave it the color of something that was not altogether real. Why had he never told her of this Indian romance? Hypnotism indeed! What man could help kneeling in passionate adoration before this queenly woman, whose beauty was of that glorious warmth and fragrance be-

longing to the purple and scarlet flowers of one's dreams, whose love combined the unreasoning devotion of a child with the proud loyalty that inspires martyrdom? They had loved—David and Sajipona—there could be no doubt of that. Before he met Una on the shores of that far-off English lake, David had stood soul to soul in a heaven created by this radiant being. He was with her again. The past was completely blotted out; the tender idyl of Derwentwater, of Rysdale, forgotten. Even the sight of Una herself stirred but the vaguest ripple of memory. There was mystery, certainly, in these strange moods of forgetfulness from which David was suffering. Her uncle could give them a learned name and account for them as belonging to something quite outside the man's will, outside his control. But what did Leighton really know of all this? Such matters were beyond the reach of the mere scientist. With a flash of scorn she doubted Leighton's knowledge; his wisdom seemed curiously limited. David's malady—if it was to be called a malady—was nothing less than the delirium caused by love itself, and as such beyond the reach of clinic or laboratory. The spell, the witchcraft, that had transformed him was wrought by Sajipona.

At first Una had not believed this; now the sudden conviction that the man she loved was faithless to her, had always been faithless to her, brought an overwhelming sense of bitterness. Her former anxiety to save him—from peril as she thought—gave place to a feeling that was almost vindictive. She did not view him with the anger of the jealous woman merely; she wanted to have done with him, to forget him altogether. His name was

linked by this beautiful Indian to one of the legends of her race; let it remain there!

"Why disturb him now?" she demanded passionately of Sajipona. "He loves you, he is content."

The revulsion of feeling in her voice was unmistakable. Her cheeks flushed, her eyes, eloquent hitherto of womanly tenderness, dilated in anger. Sajipona smiled enigmatically.

"If you had not come," she said, "there would have been no question. But you are here. He seems to have forgotten you. I am not sure, I want to be certain, now that he has forgotten you, that he is still himself."

"Why do you doubt? - Yes, he has forgotten me. And he is in your power, he is yours! Why hazard anything further?"

Sajipona ignored the scornful meaning conveyed in the words, regarding Una with a detachment indicating her absorption in a new train of thought.

"A moment ago you were anxious for his safety," she murmured. "You came here to look for him, to rescue him. Perhaps I have been unjust—perhaps you have a claim——"

"I have no claim," retorted Una proudly. "Once you saved his life. He has come to you again. He loves you. What man could help loving you!" she added bitterly.

Still Sajipona smiled.

"I must be sure of all this—and so must you," she said. "If the witchcraft is mine, its power will soon be broken. If there is something else, you, Senor, will discover it."

She turned impatiently to Raoul, desiring him to go

with her to David. Una refused to accompany them. The conviction that she had been mistaken, deluded, filled her with an unconquerable aversion to meeting the man for whom she had been willing to sacrifice so much. Aware of the unreasonableness of this feeling, she yet had no wish to conquer it. To escape from this land of mysteries and terrors, to return to the simple familiar environment of Rysdale—to forget, if that were possible—was now her one desire. She did not attempt to explain or justify herself to Sajipona. Nor was this necessary. To Sajipona, Una's anger and its cause were alike evident.

"Stay here, if you will, with Narva," said the queen, with real or feigned indifference. "But remember, you have refused to save the man whom you think is in danger."

Una did not reply. For the moment the old Indian sibyl, to whose protection she had been assigned, seemed a welcome refuge. Narva's reserve, her silence, brought a negative sort of relief to her own moods of anguish and indignation. Thus, without regret or misgiving, she watched Raoul and Sajipona disappear through the portal that had first admitted her to the great hall of the palace.



## XXI

### DREAMS

**D**AVID welcomed Sajipona with genuine pleasure, with an eagerness suggesting that he had been awaiting her coming impatiently. Heedless of his greeting, however, and regarding him earnestly, she asked if he remembered the visitor who had been with him a short time before.

"Yes! Yes!" he exclaimed. Then he went on, betraying a certain degree of anxiety in tone and manner, explaining how this visitor's face had haunted him as if it belonged to one he had seen in his dreams, one upon whom he had unwittingly inflicted pain. Of course, that could not be, he said, since there was no reality in dreams. After all, a fancied wrong was nothing—and yet, this dim memory of the woman who had been with them a moment before was confusing. Where was she now? he asked. Was she offended because he failed to recognize her? He should have known better—but dreams are troublesome things! He would like to see her again—although it might be painful in a way—and then, perhaps, he would recall more distinctly what now was merely a dim sort of shadow in the back of his brain.

They talked together in the darkened chamber overlooking the portico. The couch from which he rose to

greet Sajipona screened, with its regal hangings, Raoul from him. When the queen pointed out this new visitor to him, the result was similar to that following his encounter with Una.

"More dream-people," muttered David, passing his hand slowly across his eyes. "I know this man, but I can't exactly place him. It will come back to me in a minute."

Raoul watched him with the intent, impersonal interest a scientist gives an experiment that is nearing the climax for which everything has been prepared beforehand.

"I think I can help you," he assured him.

Then, turning to Sajipona; "I must warn you," he said in a low voice. "There will be a complete change. Why not leave things as they are?"

The queen held her head up proudly.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

Raoul shrugged his shoulders, regarding her, and then David, with a gleam of malice in his restless eyes.

"I mean just this: David will remember vividly what is now only a vague dream, and he may forget everything else. Therefore, I say, if you are satisfied with him as he is, don't disturb his present mood."

"I am not satisfied."

"Ah! you are not satisfied. You want to try one more experiment. But, just think!" he went on, a hint of mockery in his voice; "all that legend of your people, about a stranger who would appear from a far-off land and restore the Chibcha Empire—why spoil so pretty a picture? And the chances are, you will spoil it. I warn you——"

A flash of anger checked his words.

"I have pledged myself for your safety," she reminded him; "keep out of danger! I don't care for your warnings. Help this man in the way that I have asked, and as you say you can. You've tried often enough to injure him. The consequences to me from what you do now—leave all that for me to choose. Oh, never fear! I will repay your service."

David understood little of what was said, although he strove to piece out a meaning. He perceived he was the subject of their talk. From Sajipona's angry tone, moreover, he knew that she was offended. The consequent resentment that he felt in her behalf was strengthened by an instinctive feeling of suspicion and dislike toward Raoul. Checking a movement of repulsion, he appealed to Sajipona.

"Let me throw him out of here," he demanded abruptly.

"Oh, on the contrary!" smiled the queen, not displeased at his attitude. "He is here because I have asked him to come—and you will help me if you do what he tells you."

"Do what he tells me? No! Why, Sajipona, what new whim have you got in that beautiful head of yours? Something's wrong. It must be that I've offended you."

He took her hand, stroking it caressingly, while his eyes sought hers in unrestrained admiration.

"This is hard," he went on, in a low tone, half laughter, half reproach. "You are always so good, gracious as a queen should be. Now you tell me to do what an enemy of yours commands. As your enemy means mine, that is unreasonable. I fear," he added playfully, touching her hands with his lips, "I will have to disobey you,

just this once, even if you are a great queen. When I am king, and we rule our jolly cave together, as you said we would, it won't be so bad, I suppose. Men like this, certainly, won't be around to bother us. How did he get here? I thought one law of this kingdom—and a very good law it is, too—was to keep people out."

"But you got in."

"I suppose I did," he assented dreamily. "But I'm not sure how it happened."

"That's just it. This man will tell you. His name is Raoul Arthur."

David looked at him blankly, repeating the name. Raoul moved out of the shadow of the bed hangings, his eyes fixed on David's. His lips parted as if to speak, but the words were checked by an imperative gesture from the man before him.

"I'm not sure that I want to listen," said David. "I know this man, I'm certain that I do—but I can't tell you when it was that I first met him. It's all very vague, like the haze that sometimes covers the living pictures in the great pool of light in there. This memory comes like something evil, something that brings ruin. Surely, you don't want to bring ruin upon us, Sajipona! Why not blot it out altogether?"

She shook her head sadly, looking wistfully into his face. They clasped each other's hands, oblivious, for the moment, of Raoul's presence.

"If you are king there must be no forgetting, no dread of a memory that has been lost. You must know! The Land of the Condor is a land of dreams compared with the rest of the world. You have been out there, David, but you have forgotten. Now you must remember."

"No, not exactly forgotten," he said uneasily. "It's all in my head, a lot of things jumbled together—like the haze in there. I have no wish to straighten it out, either. There is such a thing as knowing too much sometimes. We are happier this way—don't let's run any risks changing what we already have. Soon there will be that feast, you said—and then, if you are queen, perhaps you will want me to be king. How proud I shall be! You are very beautiful, Sajipona; noble and great, like the daughter of real kings of the earth. You are my dream-queen, you know, the first love to touch my soul with a knowledge of beauty. Such a woman men die for! Sometimes, when you sing to me, or tease old Narva; or when I would hold you and you kind of ripple away laughing, like the little brook at the bottom of the garden—yes, that is the woman men die loving."

"I wonder if you will always think that!"

"You mean, I may forget?"

"No, you will remember."

"'Remember!' You mean, those other things wrapped in the haze—the things that we wait to see come out in the pool of light. That's just it! No, I don't want them; they spoil the first picture. To worship beauty like yours, to live forever in the spell of your eyes, the fragrance of your whole perfect being—that is happiness. I want nothing else. Why lose our dream-loves; why snatch from us, even before it is ours, the first pure flower that touches the lips of youth? Don't rob me of mine, my queen!"

His appeal thrilled with a dreamy earnestness that would have moved a sterner woman than Sajipona. Nor could there be doubt that the joy he thus kindled in her



revived a hope that Una's coming had almost destroyed. Nevertheless, in spite of this response of her own deep passion to his, her purpose remained unaltered. The very eagerness with which she drank in David's words—feeling the temptation to let things keep the happy course they had already taken—strengthened her resolve to lose no time, to risk everything now. That such a change as she had feared could be wrought in David after all this, seemed inconceivable. The witchcraft, if witchcraft it was, that drew him to her was something real, real as life, that exorcism could not dissolve. Sure of her triumph, she sought to put him to the test herself.

"David, before you came to me, was there no other woman that you knew?"

"Oh, yes, I think so, surely!" he laughed. "There might have been any number of them. But—why bother about them? Just who they were, or where I knew them, I have forgotten. I hope you don't think it necessary to remember every woman I have known! Anyway, I can't. Why, I don't even remember their names."

"I mean, one woman only. Perhaps there was one you loved, you know, among all those you have forgotten. Some one who was beautiful—is still beautiful—and who loves you. It might be the woman you saw here a short time ago. She is called Una. Surely, you remember."

He wrung her hands, kissed them, listened eagerly to what she was saying, at the same time that he longed to seal his ears from hearing. Under his breath he muttered Una's name, its iteration, apparently, increasing his agitation. Distressed by Sajipona's questions, he tried to parry them, without revealing too much of his own mental confusion. He did remember Una, he said, but

the memory was vague. She might be one of those dream-women, for all he knew, who get mixed up with one's ideas of reality. He would like to have it straightened out, to know who she was and why the thought of her troubled him. But, after all, it was not particularly important—not important, that is, compared with his love for Sajipona, his certainty that in their union lay a future happiness, not for them only, but for all this wonderful kingdom she ruled over.

“Keep in this mind, if you will,” said Sajipona, the hope that she secretly cherished greatly strengthened by the sincerity and fervor of his protestations; “but first be sure you know dreams from waking.”

Again she expressed her desire to have Raoul brought into the matter, promising David that, through his knowledge and experience, the puzzles and contradictions of the past would be set right. Yielding reluctantly, he turned to Raoul.

The latter had withdrawn to the far side of David's couch, whence he had watched, with alternate amusement and contempt, all that took place between these two. He now advanced, with the air of one who has the mastery of a difficult situation, and again proffered his services. There was mockery in his voice; before he addressed himself to his task he repeated his warning to Sajipona, reminding her that it might be better not to revive too suddenly a past filled, possibly, with disagreeable surprises. His warning waved impatiently aside, Raoul turned swiftly upon David, his restless, irritating eyes fixed in a steady glare that, bit by bit, broke down the latter's opposition. Forcing his victim to be seated upon the side of the couch, he stood over him, for a

short space, in silence. There was nothing in all this of the gesture and mummerly traditionally accompanying certain spectacular manifestations of hypnotism; neither were the two men at any time in physical contact with each other. An onlooker would say that the younger man was unconsciously brought into a passive condition by the exertion upon him of a stronger will, intensified by facial peculiarities that were well calculated to hold the attention. Eyes like Raoul's, although exciting repugnance, at the same time arouse curiosity. Once absorbed in probing their baffling depths, the object of their regard yields to a sort of baleful fascination hard to shake off. In former years David had been used by Raoul in various psychological experiments, and was thus accustomed, on such occasions, to surrender himself to the other's compelling influence. This habit was now unconsciously revived. The old grooves of thought and conduct were reopened, as it were, by the resumption of a parallel outward condition. As a result, David fell into a state of complete mental inertia.

To this influence Raoul now added the force of direct suggestion, or, rather, verbal command. The subtle arts of apparent submission, or, at the least, mild expostulation which he usually employed in gaining his ends with an intractable opponent, were cast aside. His attack was concentrated, he spoke scornfully, without compromise in utterance or meaning, so that his hypnotized subject was forced either to resist or to be carried along by him. Through this direct, positive method, he took David back, step by step, over events in the immediate past that had become obscured in his memory.

"On the road from Honda," he told him, "you were

traveling with another man. You were both going to Bogota. You stopped on the road, and at this man's suggestion you drank several toasts. The liquor confused you. You began to lose track of things. Suddenly, you and your companion met a ragged army of volunteers marching, as they said, to avenge their country on the Americans at Panama. This encounter, bringing you into direct contact with Colombian hostility to your countrymen, intensified your abnormal condition. In the confusion caused by meeting the volunteers, you were separated from your companion. His name—don't forget!—was General Herran. He also had been mixed up in the Panama troubles. By this time—that is, after you had lost Herran—owing to these various causes, you had fallen into one of those states of forgetfulness that you had experienced before. In this state you forgot what had just happened and remembered instead your experience here three years ago, when your brain had been stunned by an explosion of dynamite. Living again in this memory, you met two cavemen. They spoke to you. You knew them. Immediately, it seemed to you that you were on your way with them to meet Sajipona in this cave where you had been three years before. All that had passed between then and now faded from your mind. But, of course you know that is preposterous! Nothing fades from the mind. The memory of that period that you think you have forgotten is really in your brain, waiting for you to call it to life. And now, you will call it to life."

The emphasis, the force in what Raoul was saying was due more to his manner, the intensity with which he regarded David, than in the actual words themselves.

It was, in a measure, a contest of wills; but, either through long habit of yielding to Raoul in these experiments, or else through a desire to carry out what was evidently Sajipona's wish, there was no doubt from the first of the result. And when this result came, it was decisive. After the first sentence David's instinctive opposition was weakened. The desire to allay the anxiety obscurely felt in his own mind helped to bring him under Raoul's influence. The unexpected sight of Una had disturbed him. Ever since their meeting he had been aware that something in him was lacking, some clew lost between his past and his present. Sajipona, deeply conscious though he was of her majestic beauty, began to take on the vagueness of outline belonging to those persons whose relationship to ourselves is so doubtfully circumstanced that we momentarily expect to lose sight of them altogether. She was literally becoming the dream-woman, the intangible, lovely ideal of youth that he had playfully called her, while Una was becoming correspondingly more real, less elusive. For this very reason, this fear that fate was about to take from him one so desirable as Sajipona, he had felt an excess of joy upon seeing her now. His greeting had been more than usually demonstrative because her coming had reassured him, silenced doubts that were disquieting. Then, on the heels of this, he was aware of Raoul, with all that he meant of uncertainty and restlessness. And yet, in spite of his distaste for anything that threatened the peaceful course his life seemed to be taking, a secret feeling of relief tempered the repulsion aroused by the sudden appearance of his long forgotten friend. Raoul's words and manner completely possessed him. The scene that he recalled



of his meeting with the cavemen on the Honda road was etched on his mind as vividly as if it had just been experienced. And now, with this starting point fixed, Raoul took him backward, step by step.

Again he saw himself with General Herran, stopping on the Honda road to exchange those fatal civilities, and immediately after, the noise and confusion of the marching volunteers, with their threats of vengeance against the Yankees. Back of this came the quiet march with Herran. He recalled their talk, something of their friendly disputes. The effort to do this bewildered him. It seemed as if he were stepping from one world into another. Everything was merged into one gigantic figure of Raoul, a Raoul towering above him, concentrating himself upon him, dominating him until all else faded away and he was lost in a dreamless sleep, filled only with that word of command—"remember!"

How long he remained in this state of unconsciousness—for it was that rather than sleep—he did not know. It might have been years, it might have been a mere moment of time. When the spell was finally broken by Raoul the scene that met his awakened senses puzzled him. He was in Sajipona's palace, in the room where Raoul had confronted and subdued him. But it was all unfamiliar. His mind was filled with his mission to Bogota. His parting with Una in the sunny courtyard of the inn came back to him, irradiating a dreamy happiness. He had been through some strange experiences since then, he knew. The sight of the bed hangings under which he was reclining, the great spaces of the room, the softened light of the cave, kept alive the memory of many a novel, fantastic adventure. Shaking off

his drowsiness, he sprang to his feet. Sajipona and Raoul advanced to meet him. Sajipona! Yes, he remembered her. She was the beautiful Indian queen he was to marry in his dream—it must have been a dream, because Una was not there; except that, at the very last, he remembered, Una had stepped in for just a moment—and he had not known her! How amazed, angry, she must have been! And then—what else could have been expected?—she had gone away. He was anxious now for her safety, although how she could possibly be in this cave, how she could have found her way here, was a hopeless puzzle. The first word he uttered was a cry to Sajipona:

“Where is Una?”

Raoul would have answered, but Sajipona checked him. She realized the full significance of David’s question, although outwardly she showed nothing of her emotion.

“You are yourself again—I am glad,” she said.

“But Una——?”

“She is safe. She reached Bogota after you left Honda.”

David’s relief was evident, although his eyes showed the perplexity arising from his strange awakening.

“I thought she had found her way here,” he said. Then he turned again to Sajipona, this time with an impulsive gesture of gratitude. “I remember everything now. You saved my life. Every moment with you has been filled with happiness. How can I ever be grateful enough for the kindness you have shown me?”

He knelt before her, kissing her hand. She smiled; her other hand rested upon his shoulder.

"Grateful!" she exclaimed playfully. "Have we not a lifetime together before us? You have forgotten the festival that awaits us on the top of the mountain."

"No, I have not forgotten."

"Do you want it to take place?"

He arose to his feet, clasping his hands over his eyes as if to fix an uncertain impression. When he bared his face before her again, there was quiet determination in his glance. Again he took her hand in his, pressing it to his lips. Then, with eyes fixed full upon hers, he answered her question:

"Yes."

## XXII

### A PEOPLE'S DESTINY

MIRANDA and, in a lesser degree, those who were with him in the palace garden, were indignant at their enforced separation from Una and Sajipona. The doctor, priding himself especially on Raoul's discomfiture, considered the queen guilty of the basest ingratitude, and even suspected that she might be, at that moment, plotting their destruction. Leighton and Herran scoffed at this, but it appealed to Mrs. Quayle, and that lady, clinging nervously to Andrew, followed Miranda's explosive talk with appreciative horror. This proving a profitless diversion, however, Leighton proposed the adoption of a plan for immediate action. An attack on the palace, or a retreat that would bring them to the entrance of the cave, were alternately considered. But as both plans seemed to leave Una out of their reach, they were discarded as impossible, and it looked as if they would have to settle down to an indefinite stay in the garden. In the midst of the discussion the doors of the palace were thrown open and Narva and Una hurried out to meet them. Still fearing ambuscades and other undefinable treacheries, Miranda was by no means ready to throw aside his caution at their approach. But the aged sibyl's lofty disdain was disconcerting, nor was there any

resisting the whole-hearted joy with which Una greeted them.

To their eager inquiries she gave the briefest replies. For one thing, she assured them that they had Sajipona's promise that their escape from the cave would be easy and not too long delayed. Of the queen's friendly disposition towards them, she said, there was not the slightest doubt. They could count on the carrying out of her promise if, on their side, the conditions she proposed were observed. These conditions were: never, once they were out of it, to enter the cave again; to reveal as little as possible to the outside world of their experiences during their present adventure; and to keep an absolute silence regarding Sajipona's relationship to this mysterious race of people.

Beyond this Una would say little. The conditions were joyfully accepted. Nothing, certainly, could ever induce them to enter the cave again. But then—there was David. Yes, Una admitted, David was in the palace. She had seen him. He was free, so far as she knew, to come or go as he chose. But he had not said he would return with them. It might be, indeed, that he would choose to live permanently with the cavemen—an amazing possibility that started an avalanche of questions to which only the vaguest answers were given. Doubtless they would see David before they left, Una assured them, and learn for themselves all they wished to know. As for Raoul, she could tell nothing. He was, apparently, in favor with the queen, and engaged in some undertaking for her.

Una betrayed none of her suspicions regarding David in her discussion of these matters. She had not seen



him since that first meeting in the little portico adjoining his quarters in the palace, hence she was ignorant of the result of Raoul's experiment. Sajipona had come to her immediately after its conclusion and, judging by the quiet cheerfulness of her manner, she fancied everything had gone to her satisfaction. This was confirmed by the announcement of the festival that was shortly to take place. This festival, Una had been told, was to be the occasion for great rejoicing among the cave people. It was a sort of national day, a celebration that had not been held in many a long generation. It was intended to recall, she heard, the ancient feast of El Dorado, the Gilded Man, about which, of course, as it existed among the Chibchas before the period of the Spanish invasion, Una was familiar through the traditions as told by David and Leighton. What form this revival of the old ceremonies would take had not been explained. But it piqued her curiosity and, in spite of resentment and wounded pride, she cherished a secret hope that it would bring about a final understanding of David's position in regard to Sajipona and herself. She felt sure David would be at the festival, and she had an intuitive feeling as well that his presence would dispel the mystery that sundered them. She did not look for, nor did she consciously want a reconciliation. Bitterly she denied herself the possibility of one. But she wished to know definitely, and to its full extent, David's faithlessness to her. After she had learned this, they could not start on their homeward journey too quickly.

Still absorbed in these reflections, Una and her companions, under Narva's lead, entered the great court of the palace. Una, of course, had grown familiar with

the strange features to be found in this hall of marvels; but the others, entering it for the first time, were amazed at what they saw there. In Leighton this feeling of wonder reached its highest pitch. The shattering of one scientific belief after another that he had experienced ever since entering the cave left him, it is true, somewhat callous to new impressions. But this apathy, if it can be called that, melted away as he stood beneath the great white dome that soared in flashing lines above them. Looking up at the huge ball of fire suspended just beyond the apex of this dome, for a moment he remained speechless. Then, turning to his companions, he voiced the ecstasy that comes with some unexpected, epoch-making discovery.

"Do you know what that is?" he demanded.

No one did. Miranda shrugged his shoulders and turned his attention ostentatiously elsewhere, as if floating balls of crackling white flames, used to illuminate caves, were matters of ordinary experience with him. Andrew's mouth was opened quite as wide as his eyes as he stood staring upward at the curious illumination. It would be a splendid saving of candle power, he thought, more than enough for the whole village, if they could only manage to take it back with them to Rysdale. But, even if it were small enough, it wouldn't be possible to carry in one of their trunks, since it would be sure to set things on fire. This objection was made by Mrs. Quayle, and seemed reasonable enough.

"That is the most remarkable thing on earth," went on Leighton, heedless, in his excitement, of the frivolous comments of his companions. "I have often thought that sooner or later something like this would be dis-

covered. It is impossible to estimate its value. Why, all the billions of dollars that there are in the world to-day could not pay for it at the present market prices."

The calm assurance with which this estimate was given shattered Miranda's pose of studied indifference.

"What is it?" he asked sharply.

"Radium!"

The silence that followed was eloquent of the mingled incredulity and delight with which so staggering an announcement was received. Leighton, fascinated with his subject, proceeded to explain things, much as if he were at home again in his laboratory, working out a particularly novel experiment, and expounding his various theories of physics. Of course, he had nothing but theory to go on, since he had never seen, heard of, or believed possible such a huge mass of radium as this that hung above them. And because it was so unbelievably huge, the others refused at first to take it for what he said it was. But he insisted that it could be nothing else. Radium it was—and with this as his basis of fact, he quickly built up an imposing theory that he used to explain more than one matter that before had puzzled them.

This immense globe of radium, he believed, in the first place, was the parent-body of all the infinitesimal particles of this remarkable substance that had recently been found in different parts of the world. The mysterious properties of radium, he said, were only dimly understood as yet by physicists who had experimented with it. Apparently it was a mineral; but as it revealed a constant and amazing activity, throwing out a force that so far had baffled analysis, there were those who held that it

was a living, or, better yet, a life-giving substance. The existence of this immense body of radium here, in the center of the cave, explained, to the satisfaction of Leighton, much of the strange phenomena they had seen. Here, obviously, was the source of the soft, diffused light that had puzzled them ever since they passed through the Condor Gate; and it was to this center of energy that they must attribute the increase in buoyancy and physical well-being experienced the further they penetrated into this subterranean world. The peculiar growths, also, half vegetable, half mineral, that had given the appearance of groves and gardens to certain portions of the cave through which they traveled, were undoubtedly due to this marvelous force, occupying the same relative position towards subterranean life that the sun did to the outside world of nature. Moreover, Leighton firmly believed that the supremacy of radium as the life-giver in this cave, involved the existence, as they would discover, of other phenomena having still more subtle, even psychic, qualities. Narva grunted significantly at this observation, and Una confirmed the truth of it by relating how the floor of the court where they were standing had, only a short time before, reflected a series of pictures of events taking place in the outside cave, by means of which they had been able to follow Leighton's approach to the palace and watched the collision of his party with that of Raoul. It was through this peculiar photographic power of radium, indeed, that Sajipona could discover whatever was taking place in the remotest regions of her domain. This information did not surprise Leighton in the least. On the contrary, he appeared to take it as a matter of course, one of many marvels that

might be expected in a land run, so to speak, by radium.

Absorbed in the discussion of these matters, no one noticed the entrance of Sajipona. The queen, coming from the apartment where she had left David and Raoul, was not in a hurry to make her presence known, and lingered long enough behind the others to enjoy the curiosity and wonder with which they were regarding the globe of light above them. She now advanced smilingly, addressing herself particularly to Leighton, whom she complimented for his shrewd guess as to the nature of the force pervading and governing the cave. Indian though she was, inheritor of a realm that, in all its customs and beliefs, was primitive, distant from the civilizations found elsewhere in the world to-day, she had heard and studied enough of Europe and America to be familiar with some of the momentous discoveries of modern science. Hence, she had been quick to grasp the fact that this subterranean sun, worshiped by her ancestors ages ago as the Life Giver—the God that, according to Indian legend, resided under Lake Guatavita—was nothing more nor less than an immense body of radium, the most precious substance known to man, the scarcity of which had led scientists to ransack the uttermost parts of the earth in the hope of adding to their store of it. Here it had always been, the one priceless possession of her people, enabling them to live apart, independent of the world that threatened at one time to exterminate them. How this radium had come there originally she could not tell. It was the result, doubtless, of hidden forces about which philosopher and scientist are as yet ignorant. Or, it might itself be the architect of the subterranean world whose extent and manifold



marvels had amazed the explorers. By means of this radium force, as Una had told them, she was able to see what was happening in any part of the cave, even throughout that dark region lying beyond the Condor Gate—an incredible statement, as it appeared to Leighton. For they had been in this outer cave and discovered in it neither the light nor the warmth they had enjoyed on this side the Condor Gate. Hence, argued the savant, this outer cave appeared to lie entirely beyond the zone of radium influence. Sajipona smiled at Leighton's objection and asked him if nothing had occurred in the outer cave, while he was there, that he had been unable to explain. They had been through so many marvels in so short a time that the explorers looked at each other doubtfully. Mrs. Quayle answered for them.

"Yes, the terrible stone that pulled off my jewelry, and then dragged gold up from the lake outside—how was that done?" she asked, still smarting, apparently, from the indignities she had suffered.

"Oh, that was merely a powerful magnet that attracts gold instead of iron," explained Sajipona, as if such trifling matters were scarcely worthy to be ranked with the other marvels of the cave. "This magnet played a great part, centuries ago, in gathering together all the wealth of my ancestors from the Sacred Lake where it had been cast during the Feast of the Gilded Man. To-day it is never used because all the gold has been taken out of the lake. But—was there nothing else mysterious?"

"Caramba!" ejaculated Miranda, "I know! When we come in from the outside, all is open; we can come in and we can come out. And then, this little old woman

is frighten, and I take her out. That is, I think I take her out. But the wall is shut, and we cannot see where it is. We are in prison. Who did that? There is no one there."

Sajipona laughed.

"Yes, that is it! No one was there—except Radium, the influence from the great globe hanging above us. Here, you see, it does many more things than it does in your outside world. It is really the eye of the cave—and sometimes the arm. Although its light does not, as you know, extend into the outer cave, it reflects here, within this circle, whatever is lighted up beyond there. When you came in with your torches I was able to follow you by this means—very obscurely, of course, because torches throw only a small circle of light. I could hardly make you out, but I felt sure who you were. I was expecting you. And then, because I needed you here and feared you might grow tired of so long a journey, I shut the entrance to the cave so you could not escape. That is where radium works like an arm. It can carry an electric force, an irresistible current, without using wire. For our own safety we have this force connected with the entrance to the cave. When that entrance is open and we want to close it, this force is released and moves a great rock that glides into place across the passageway, where it seems to be a part of the wall on either side."

This dissertation from Sajipona on the uses to which radium had been put in her kingdom was amazing enough to Leighton's trained, careful mind. In his own studies of radium activity he had failed to find any indication of the possibility even for the development of

the sensational features that were now given to him as accomplished, familiar fact. For one thing, science was restricted in its experiments by the small quantity of radium within its reach. Here the amount, estimating the size of the fiery globe above him, was measured by the hundreds of tons—a fact, of course, that must greatly increase the field over which radium might be made to operate. Nevertheless, except for this vague theory that an unknown power could be developed from a great mass of this marvelous substance, suspended in a great chamber, or series of chambers, not subject to the ordinary outside influences of heat and light and air, it was difficult to find a reasonable explanation for the things that Sajipona told him and that he himself had seen. Most astounding it was, also, to a modern scientist, brought up in the methods and limited by the views of his age, to discover here a development in physics, beyond the dreams of the most daring investigator, that actually belonged to a primitive race, and was first practiced by them in a period and country without scientific culture. The whole affair, indeed, furnished an instance where science seemed to overstep the borderland of the miraculous. It was as marvelous, after all, as the familiar achievements of wireless or the cinema would have been if suddenly presented to the world of half a century ago.

Enjoying the savant's bewilderment, Sajipona described more of the cave's wonders. Her forefathers, she said, had discovered a way to imitate the changes from day to night by a simple process of veiling and unveiling the ball of radium. This was found necessary in order to create the right variations between growth and a state

of rest in vegetation. When circumstances made it desirable to use the cave as a permanent habitation, it was found that this variation from light to darkness was indispensable to human welfare. Without it there could be little of the happiness that comes from the storing up and the subsequent expenditure of human energy. Discovering this, certain wise Indians among the cavemen of the past made further experiments in the regulation of light and heat. Among other things, these pioneers in a new science found that the color rays emanating from radium had different properties—some being more life-giving than others—and that by controlling these rays it was possible to create and develop various kinds of subterranean plants. They firmly believed, also, that by working along these lines it would be possible to arrive at new animal forms. Some remarkable experiments were made in this direction, but the results were too indefinite for practical purposes. The whole problem was therefore abandoned years ago, its unpopularity having been increased by the religious prejudice excited against it. This intrusion of what he regarded as blind superstition upon the profitable labors of science incensed Leighton, who muttered imprecations on the idolatries of barbarians. But in this he was checked by Sajipona, who declared that the religious beliefs of her people were in no sense more idolatrous than many of the beliefs current in the outside world. They had their fantastic legends, it is true—like the story of the god who, through the ascendancy of an evil rival, had been imprisoned for ages at the bottom of the Sacred Lake, whence he had been released by the prayers and sacrifices of his followers. Such legends the more enlightened regarded

purely as fables, within which were conveyed certain truths that were of lasting value to mankind. The ignorant probably failed to recognize these truths underneath their coverings of legend. But it was not merely the ignorant, it was those who possessed a higher religious sense who were revolted by the effort to create animal life through artificial means. This feeling of antagonism arose simply because in the last of the experiments attempted by the Indian wise men, certain forms were developed, giving feeble signs of life, and indicating unmistakably that if they were ever endowed with a complete, independent existence, they would become a race of malevolent beings, a menace to all existing institutions and peoples. Hence, these wise men were counseled by the more practical and simple-minded of their contemporaries to abandon the rôle of creator, leaving the production of life to the rude and bungling methods to which Nature was accustomed. They were loath to yield in this, but public opinion became too strong for them; the religious element conquered—and these servants of old turned their attention to a new problem that had already been suggested by their partial experiments in the creation of life, and that promised something really worth while. This new problem involved the regulation of man's moral and intellectual natures, not through the teaching of ideas, but by the employment of physical and chemical forces.

It had been discovered long before that the Radium Sun controlled the subterranean life coming within its influence. But as this sun was itself capable of regulation, many novel—and safe—departures in human development were made possible by an intelligent practice of



the new solar science. Here again, as in the experiments with plants, it was the variation of colors, of light and darkness, that furnished the key to what the Indian savants were after. Thus, it was learned that certain radium colors had an affinity for certain moral attributes. These moral attributes could, for this reason, be greatly increased by placing the man or woman to be operated on in a properly regulated color bath. Unfortunately, these wise men had not continued their experiments with this Theory of Colors after reaching the first few crude results. They lost interest in the subject when its intensely practical nature became apparent. Hence, a complete classification of all the colors and combinations of colors, with their moral and intellectual affinities, was still lacking. But enough was discovered to be of real, positive benefit in the education of the cavemen and in keeping order among them. People who were harassed by domestic troubles, for instance, were put through a course of color treatment; wives who were tempted to leave their husbands, or husbands who got tired of their wives (as, it seems, they sometimes did in the Land of the Condor) were plunged into color-baths, varied according to the exact nature of the complaint from which they were suffering, and kept in these baths until they were brought back to a reasonable frame of mind. And then, in matters that affected the well-being of the whole community—matters that in the outside world would give rise to various political panaceas—it was a simple application of the Color Theory that would straighten things out. It was found, for instance, that yellow rays from the Radium Sun stimulated generosity. Thus, in the case of a man whose intense

acquisitiveness threatened to monopolize the wealth of the community, a steady application of yellow rays was sure to be beneficial, if not to him, at least to those about him.

A case of this kind, indeed, had been recently operated on in this way. The patient had accumulated such vast wealth that he had grown to be a public inconvenience. As his business dealings, however, did not come within reach of the criminal law, and as his wealth was thus due to his natural bent for finance, the courts could not touch him. He was, therefore, placed—not by way of punishment, but as a mark of public esteem—in a bath of yellow light. The effect was extraordinary and bore out all the claims of the originators of the Color Theory. He had not been in this yellow bath more than a few hours before he began to part with his wealth. On the second day he became more reckless in his benefactions, and this frenzy for giving away what he had before so jealously guarded from his neighbors, increased at so rapid a rate that by the end of a week his entire fortune had passed, through his own voluntary act, into the hands of the government and various benevolent institutions. When he had nothing more to give, it was decided that he had had enough of the yellow treatment. He was then released from the honors the State had showered upon him, and passed the rest of his life rejoicing in his penniless condition.

Then, there was the case of a man who had grown tired of his wife, and who had outraged the sense of the community by leaving her. He was captured and placed in a bath of green light. In a very short time he got over his roving propensities and became so persistent in his

attentions to his wife that, in order to give her some peace, he was put into another bath having a slightly neutralizing effect on the first, or green, bath. Thus, the marital troubles of this couple were completely and finally straightened out and they lived amicably together without the tiresome intervention of mutual friends, or of the law courts.

The interesting possibilities of this Color Theory in penology and in the regulation of domestic affairs, did not escape Leighton. He had himself believed that in the latest discoveries in physics there might be found a connecting link between the science of matter and the science of mind. His natural skepticism, however, did not allow him to accept too readily all of Sajipona's amazing statements. He doubted her real knowledge of these abstruse subjects. She spoke of these matters, indeed, crudely, not with the familiarity as to detail of a trained scientist. What she said had all the simplicity, and much of the fantastic absurdity, of a fairy tale. But beneath its extravagance there was enough substance to her story, and the theory upon which it was based, to make it worthy a scientist's consideration. For one thing, it changed completely the notion Leighton had already formed of this subterranean world. The story, for instance, of the chastened millionaire took into account a complex social system that was utterly unthinkable in a region so confined territorially, so limited, by reason of its peculiar situation, as regards human activity, as this so-called Land of the Condor. The inhabitants of the cave, from what he had seen of them—in the straggling village they had passed through with Narva, and among the followers of Raoul—gave no indi-

cation of a culture superior to that shown by people just emerging from savagery. These cavemen, certainly, had not reached that stage of enlightenment from which is developed the millionaire capitalist of whose interesting ventures in monopoly Sajipona had told them. In the ill-fated Anitoo, however, and his men, and in the people surrounding Sajipona, there was evidence of social and mental superiority. The two men who served as the queen's ambassadors in the garden, and who were distinguished from the rest by their red robes, belonged either to a priesthood, or to some order that placed them intellectually above the common rank. They were undoubtedly learned far beyond the Indian average. One of them, indeed, was with Sajipona in the court, and prompted her more than once during her explanation of the Radium Sun and its uses. He spoke in a low voice, and in a language unintelligible to the Americans. From his bearing and fluency of speech, Leighton concluded that he was one of the commonwealth's so-called "wise men," an investigator, possibly, in those physical and psychological phenomena that held out such tantalizing promise of new conquests in the domain of human knowledge.

Sajipona was quick to perceive the difficulties arising in Leighton's mind in regard to her narrative, but she referred to another occasion a description of the science, religious beliefs, social institutions and customs of the subterranean people. In attempting such a task, she declared that the priest at her side, whom she addressed with befitting reverence as Omono, Teacher of Mankind, would be far more capable than she. For it was Omono, with his companion, Saenzias, who received and carried

out the laws and traditions of their race—always subject, of course, to her own authority—and it was by them that these laws were further perfected before being passed on to the two priests who would succeed them in administering the affairs of the kingdom.

“You are puzzled, naturally,” she said, “to hear of the existence of wealth and poverty, charitable institutions and governments, science and religion, in a kingdom whose boundaries are within the walls of a cave. But you have seen only a small part of this Land of the Condor. On every side it extends many miles further underground. And in the South from here, not a great distance, there is a vast region—unknown to the rest of the world—filled with mountains, fertile valleys, rivers, and bodies of water strewn like jewels over plains that yield an abundance sufficient for all mankind. This land is at the mouth of our subterranean world. It lies in the heart of that region marked ‘unexplored’ by your map-makers. We have no fear that it will ever pass from our hands, that it will ever be more than a blank patch on your maps, for on every side it is defended by unscalable cliffs of snow and ice. It can be reached only through this ancient cave. Perhaps, in the ages to come, when the people of the outside world and of this race that has lived here in an unbroken line as far back as the memory of man can go, have been perfected, these barriers will be thrown down. Such has been the prophecy of some of our wise men; and to-day Omono and Saenzias tell us that this final period of perfection is rapidly approaching. It may be that before you go out again into your own world, you will see more of the wonders of this Land of the Condor, and of the unknown Land of the



Sun that lies at its door. There are cities out there, built with an art that is only rudely possible in our underground home. Here, you are amazed at the cunning of some of our work. You wonder that a race of moles could conjure wealth and beauty out of a cavern that is never opened to the airs of heaven. But in our Land of the Sun there are marvels far greater than these. In both regions you will see the work of the same people; but here where you stand is the center of our race, or—as you would call it—our seat of government. It is here, because of the Radium Sun above us, that we find our strength. But it is outside, in the Land of the Sun, that the millions who call me their queen, are working out the destinies of future generations. Before these last years your people and our people have kept apart. You were ignorant of our existence, and we held aloof from you, remembering the cruelty and injustice of which you were guilty centuries ago. But the time has come, so Omono and Saenzias declare, when our two worlds must venture the first step in the knowledge of each other. Through me this experiment will take place. You are instruments in it. To-day decides the success or failure of our plan. The wealth of our kingdom we have guarded all these centuries, not for ourselves only. To increase it we must share it with the outside world. But if the outside world is not ready, if it still exists merely to plunder the wealth others have gathered, we will wait, if need be, for another flight of centuries.”

Sajipona’s announcement aroused an immense curiosity among the explorers. What did she mean? they asked each other. How was this working out of their mutual destinies to be accomplished at this particular time and

through them? From Narva they had heard vaguely of a festival that was to be celebrated—and now they learned that the hour for it was at hand. Sajipona told them this, and as the information followed immediately upon what she had let them know of her aspirations regarding the future of her people, they concluded that in some mysterious way, the festival and the fate of this subterranean kingdom were bound together. They waited to hear more but, apparently, Sajipona had finished all she had to say to them. Turning to Una, she led her apart from the others. The two talked earnestly together, the one protesting, the other entreating. Finally, Sajipona appeared to succeed in her request, whatever it was, and taking Una's hand walked with her to a distant part of the hall. Here a door was thrown open. Una entered the apartment beyond, the door closing behind her. It was all so quickly done, the others barely realized that Una had left them before they were re-joined by Sajipona, who spoke to them as if nothing had happened.

"Let us go," she said. "The festival is ready. There is no time to lose."

## XXIII

### THE GILDED MAN

**A**FTER leaving Sajipona, Una found herself in an apartment small compared with the spacious courts and chambers she had seen elsewhere in the palace. This apartment differed, also, in its furnishings—a few uncompromising stone benches along the walls and nothing more—while the dim light gave to everything a gloomy, uninviting character. But Una was in no mood to linger; the queen's words had filled her with an anxiety that must be appeased at once. Hurrying down the middle of the long room, she reached, at the further end, a sort of staircase, or ramp, leading upward in long, sweeping spirals to a height that was lost in intervening walls and clustered columns. Mounting this ramp, she noted with pleasure that as the ground floor receded everything lightened. Judging by the splendid upward curve of the walls, she concluded that she must be ascending a gallery winding around the great central dome of the court where, a moment before, she had listened with the others to Sajipona's account of the mysteries of the cave. On the inner side of the gallery, the side overhanging the court, the wall was semi-transparent, and through it sparkled flashes of the radium light flooding the great chamber within. Light came, also, from the opposite

side, filtering downward, apparently through another medium, from the central luminary above. The air grew warmer; there were faint perfumes, as if of essences distilled from tropical flowers, that thrilled with a delightful drowsiness. Soft echoes from distant music increased this feeling of restfulness. Sound and fragrance were so subtly united, they seemed so completely an irradiation from the inner spirit brooding over the place, that one accepted them as being utterly natural, utterly free from the startling or the marvelous.

Una could not guess the source of the liquid, musical notes. They might have come from the quaint instruments she had seen so deftly played upon by the cave-men marching with Anitoo, or from the lyre that, at Sajipona's touch, gave forth such plaintive melodies. But the music she listened to now was not continuous; its lack of formal melody, unity of theme, gave it a quality different from anything she had ever heard. In the outer world it might have been taken for the wind-song sweeping through tossed branches of forest trees. But here there was neither wind nor forest. The air was motionless, and had ever been so; the vast spaces seemed filled with the unruffled sleep of centuries. Down below, in the great court, and even in the palace garden, saturated with light and beauty though both were, one felt something of the chill mystery that penetrates all underground places. Here there was mystery, but it was a kind that soothed rather than terrified. Tier by tier, as Una passed along the slender white columns enclosing the gallery up which she was ascending, the sense of gloom, foreboding, that had weighed upon her until now, was weakened. She felt the magic of a new world

of romance and adventure. She was at the very heart of its secret. Flashes of color in paneled niches along the walls piqued her curiosity. Robes of vivid scarlet, hiding limbs of sparkling whiteness, it might be, hung just beyond her reach. Further on these niches were filled with glittering masses of gold, heaped high in barbaric scorn of art or fitness. Rudely fashioned crowns, massive enough to have burdened their wearers with more than the traditional care that goes with royalty; arm-lets, breastplates, tiaras heavy with emeralds—in deep recesses, row on row, from story to story, these witnesses of the pomp and pride of fallen nations, were thrown together in a careless profusion possible only in an Aladdin's palace of marvels.

As Una hurried past she realized with a thrill that she was in the ancient treasure-house of a once mighty empire. The fruit of the earth's richest mines, brought here by the labor and cunning of centuries, lay at her hand. It seemed impossible that all this jeweled splendor could have escaped the fires of war and crime that had kindled within the breasts of millions who had sacrificed their lives merely to grasp some small portion of it. Fascinating baubles now were these relics of past greatness, dainty or rude, meaningless, or eloquent of forgotten faiths and legends. Innocent of harm they seemed, a passing feast for the eye, trophies to celebrate and adorn feminine loveliness, but no longer a madness in the bones of men.

Thus, vaguely, did this vision of ancient riches appear to Una. Gold and jewels, robes and ornaments wrought by an art that had been lost long since—the rich color, the glitter of all these things delighted her. They



seemed a part—the visible part—of the music and fragrance with which the winding gallery of marvels was filled. It appeared to her that she was on the threshold of some great awakening experience. She knew that it was David whom she would see; and this knowledge started a strange conflict of emotions. The memory of his lack of faith, the incomprehensible manner in which he had turned from her, brought humiliation, anger. But the first bitterness that went with all this had lost its corrosive power. The spell of the ancient Indian race whose secrets she was exploring was upon her. Her senses were soothed by the mysterious beauty of these enchanted corridors. Here she would see David—and the thought was indefinitely satisfying. She did not know whether she could forgive him, whether she could become reconciled to a disloyalty that had so easily swerved him from the most sacred of vows. But after all it was witchcraft—only witchcraft could work such things as these—that had estranged him from her. This she knew because the inner heart of her own love remained as it had ever been. He was still David. He needed her, he was unhappy. Outwardly he might seem faithless as the most shameless Proteus of romance. Nevertheless, there was something else, something that even Sajipona could not know, but that she knew and that bound him to her. It was for this she had followed him through inconceivable adventures—for this, one danger after another had been faced and overcome. And now all this misery had reached a happy ending. He was here, awaiting her like some prince in a fairy palace. Sajipona had promised it, had brought them together

at last. She felt his presence before she heard his voice. And then he spoke to her:

"Una, what new witchcraft has brought you here!"

He stood at a turn in the gallery up which she was ascending. As their eyes met, the distant, wind-blown music, the subtle fragrance of flowers, seemed to bring into this palace of mystery and enchantment the fields and meadows of Rysdale. There she and David were again together, vowing their first love. The harmonies of brooks, birds, the ripples that sped their canoe past woodland and down shaded valleys, the thousand intimate details of the springtide loved of lovers, were about them once more. For the David who stood beside her in the queen's treasure-house was the David of that far-off, peaceful countryside, not the strange being she had met for that brief dark moment in front of Sajipona's palace. At the first glance she could see he had passed through some vital change since then. He was no longer as a man walking in dreams. There was no troubled uncertainty in his face, no faltering in his step. He came to her now, all his soul in his eyes, but with perplexed look for all that, as if the destiny that had parted them had not yet consented to their reunion.

"I have been dreaming," he said simply. "It was an old dream, I find. Now that I am awake, some lights and shadows from my dream-world remain to haunt me."

His brief explanation of the strange mental experience he had just been through was scarcely needed. Una told him how they had searched for him, how they had finally heard of this cave and of his first adventure in it. And then, how, tracking him to this place, they had met

Sajipona and learned of the wonders of her underground kingdom.

"We are awaiting the festival now," she said wistfully. "She told me of it, and sent me here to meet you. I think it must have begun already. The music—it must be the music for the Gilded Man—has grown louder and louder as I have climbed this wonderful gallery. Sajipona and the rest will meet us—it must be just there, beyond."

They had clasped each other's hands, their eyes looked their fill. But now they stood apart, their faces averted, words of passionate avowal unuttered on David's lips.

"The festival! I know!" David exclaimed.

Then he turned again to Una, taking her hand and trying to disguise the grief that was all too plain in words and manner. He told her of Sajipona's kindness, of his gratitude to her. He described something of her plans to redeem her people from the ill fortune that had shut them out from the rest of the world. All this, he said, could not be accomplished right away; but the first step would be taken now. David had a part to play in the working out of the queen's plan. But just what he was to do, what this part was, he guessed only vaguely. The bringing together of the ancient people with the new, the Indian race with their white conquerors—something of the kind was in her mind. The vast store of wealth, also, that they saw about them was to be distributed among those who needed it. Sajipona and her people had long since ceased to care for this treasure that had brought such untold suffering and misfortune to their race. But they would not part with it until they were certain of their recompense. And perhaps they wouldn't

part with it at all—there seemed to be a curse attached to these blood-stained emeralds and gold.

In all this, perhaps symbolically, the festival, the first strains of which they could hear, would have much to do—and Sajipona and he were to be the leading figures in that festival. He had consented to this—freely. The declaration was made with melancholy emphasis. It seemed to Una the death-knell to their happiness. It placed David suddenly in a world quite outside her own, as if all along his life had been, must be, apart from hers. There could be only one reason for this, of course—Sajipona! Una seized upon it bitterly.

“You have always loved her!” she cried.

David did not answer. The fates that had brought them to this pass were much too intricate to be lightly disentangled. Sajipona was to him a being exquisitely beautiful—beautiful in every way—the most perfect woman he had known. But there was a strength and glory in her loveliness that placed her above the reach of mere human affection. She was a being separate and distinct from all others—and yet necessary to the very existence of the thousands who seemed to be dependent on her. It might be love that he felt for her—but it was more like the adoration with which one regards something sacred, infinitely distant and beyond our own likings and frailties. This feeling of adoration might, indeed, have been transformed into the passion called love. This surely would have happened had it not been for one thing——

“Una, I love you!”

She started, looking wonderingly at him. How could he say that to her now, after all that had passed? Could

it be possible that he was still in that strange dream-state from which, he declared, he had been so happily awakened? Ah, but it was in that dream-state that he did not love her, did not even know her! And now—her own exclamation was eloquent of the doubt, the amazement with which she heard him—

“David!”

“But, it is perfectly true,” he protested. “Why don’t you believe me? You always have believed me! What is before us I cannot tell for certain. Sajipona has my word, and whatever she commands I will do. I owe her my life. More than that—the faith that a man gives to one whose beauty has opened to him the depths of his own soul. But this has nothing to do with us. This is not love. Come what will, I love you, Una. I love you—I love you!”

They looked at each other fearfully. There might be logic, of a sort—logic born of a kind of poetic exaltation—in the distinction that David tried to draw between the two women and his own feeling for them. Circumstances, however, were stronger than argument. They felt the approach of disaster. By David’s own confession, if Sajipona willed it, their love was lost. For the first time Una realized that it was not David, not anything really tangible, but a power outside of him that kept them apart. Against the apparent evidence of her senses, her faith in David was restored. She knew him now, she felt, as she had never known him before. And they loved—that was enough. It was all very difficult to unravel, the maze they were in. There might be endless tragedy at the next turn of the gallery. But at least there was love here, if only for the briefest of moments.



Their reawakened passion tingled in their veins. Reason or unreason, they knew they belonged to each other—although they might be separated forever before this day of miracles was over. Una's jealousy, doubt, bitterness were all forgotten. Her cheek flushed with joy, her eyes sparkled with the sweet madness that belongs only to youth, youth at the highest pinnacle of its desire. Neither spoke. Speech would have silenced the wordless eloquence with which their love revealed itself. They drew closer to each other. Again their hands met. Their lips touched. Love swept away all doubts and denials in one passionate embrace.

Ever since the world began lovers have solved their difficulties thus, and they will doubtless choose this dumb method long after an aging civilization has pointed out a better one. Whether they are wise or not, a college of philosophers would fail to convince us. In this particular instance Love put forth his plea at the very instant when these, his youthful votaries, were wanted of another, alien destiny. As they stood together, oblivious of all else save their own passion, the music grew louder, more joyous, throbbing now in statelier, more intelligible cadence than before. At the end of the gallery a new light began to break. The intervening wall disappeared, disclosing an inner chamber filled with a throng of gaily dressed people, some of whom played upon musical instruments, while others swung golden censers from which floated forth in amber clouds the fragrance of many gardens.

A living corridor of color, formed of courtiers, musicians, priests, extended from this inner chamber in a spreading half circle, the broad portion of which reached

the gallery where David and Una were standing. At the center of all this light and motion and color was Sajipona, every inch of her a queen, although the pallor of her cheek, the unwonted tenseness of eye and lip, told of emotions that needed all a queen's strength to restrain. Immediately about her were grouped the explorers; Miranda, silenced for once by the splendor of the scene in which he suddenly found himself in a leading part; Leighton, still absorbed in the problems of science revealed at every turn in this wonderland. Just above and behind them rose a human figure of heroic proportions, concealed from head to foot in flowing white draperies. Against the rounded pedestal of green stone sustaining this figure leaned Sajipona, one arm resting along the base of the statue, the other lost in the silken folds of her robe.

As David and Una, startled by the sudden clash of the music, raised their heads, her eye caught theirs. Like a queen of marble she looked at them, unrecognizing, motionless, save for the slightest tremor of her faultlessly chiseled mouth—the one sign that she saw and knew. With a gesture she checked the music. Silence followed, unbroken by the faintest murmur of voices or rustle of garments from the waiting throng of cavemen. Unabashed by this strange reception, moved only by the steady gaze of the majestic woman standing before him, David, still clasping Una's hand, came swiftly forward and would have thrown himself impetuously at Sajipona's feet. The faintest hint of a smile gleamed in her eyes as she prevented this show of homage. Her greeting came clear and low from quivering lips:

"This is our festival, David!"

Again the music sounded, not, as before, in a joyous burst of melody, but in a slow chant, barbaric in feeling, wailing, unearthly. The listening throng moved uneasily, filled with vague premonitions of what was to come. Sajipona lifted her hands to the statue, then smiled serenely at the two lovers before her. The spell was broken.

"This is the ancient festival of my people," she said. "It should be a time for rejoicing. The Gilded Man awaits us."

As she spoke the veils covering the statue dropped one by one to the ground. Before them stood, dazzling, glorious, the figure of a man carved in gold. His head was uplifted, as if intent on something beyond the ordinary ken of mortal. Only the face was clearly and sharply chiseled; the rest of the figure—limbs, body, and flowing drapery—blended together in one massive pillar of flaming gold.

The effect on the beholder of this exquisitely molded shaft of metal, upon which the radium light from above sparkled and flashed, was indescribable. The brilliance, the lavishness of it, savored of barbarism; but the delicacy of detail, the simple pathos and exaltation portrayed in the face, had in it an art that was Nature's own. And the wonder of it, the miracle that caught all men's eyes as they looked, was the likeness that lived in every feature. For this Gilded Man, newly wrought to preside over the last festival of this forgotten race; this one final splendid piece of work that summed up all that was best and noblest in an ancient art, was a deathless portrait in gold of the man who stood before Sajipona, of the man upon whom she had built her hopes, and for whom she

would sacrifice everything. It was David—a queen's tribute of immortal love.

Touched at heart, the living David knelt at Sajipona's feet, pressing her robe to his lips. A moment she stooped caressingly above him, whispering words that none—not even he—could hear. Then proudly she stood before them, regarding those about her with an eye that did not falter in its imperious glance.

"It is the last festival," she said. "With this the Land of the Condor will pass away. The outside world of men has tracked us here before the dream that we had of a golden age could be fulfilled. Not with us can these be allied. They love not as we love; their faith, the beauty that they prize, is not as ours. In another time it might have been—perhaps it still will be. But, if it is to be, that dream will come true ages after this Feast, this Sacrifice, of the Golden Man is over."

As she finished speaking, Sajipona looked again at David, unspoken grief in her eyes. He stretched his hands to her, murmuring her name, appealing to her, terror-stricken by the stern look that slowly overspread her features, telling of some great and tragic purpose she was bent on carrying out. But she was unmoved by his entreaties. Slowly she turned away. Then, beckoning to the priests, Saenzias and Omono, she disappeared with them behind the golden statue. Those who remained, breathlessly awaited her return—the explorers restless and anxious, the cavemen rapt in a sort of religious ecstasy. It was thus that their ancestors had awaited the plunge of the Indian monarch into the dark silent waters of the Sacred Lake.

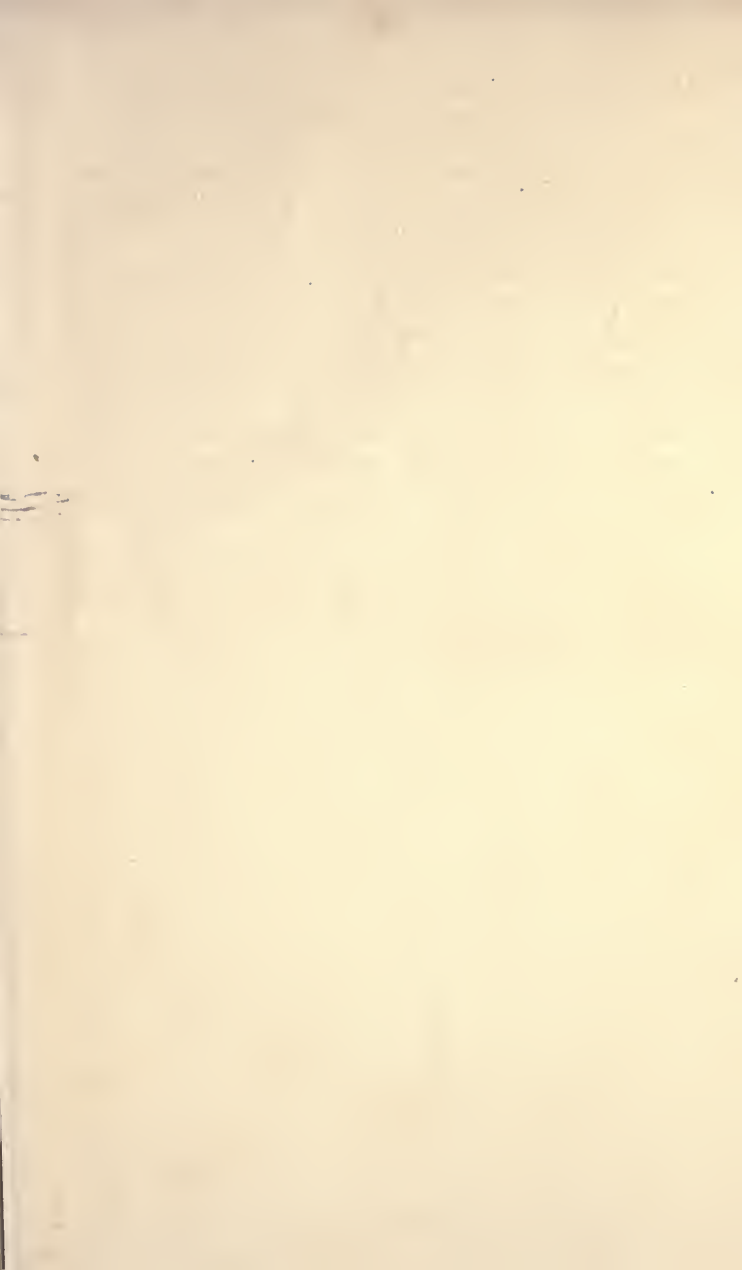
And now high above them the thin wall of the palace

roof was opened. Without, the great sun of this underworld poured down its radiance. Almost blinded, they could still dimly see, standing just on a level with this sun, Sajipona arrayed as became the last descendant of the zipas. At her side were the two priests; but these retreated as the scorching heat pierced them. For an instant she stood where they left her, a vision of majestic beauty that fascinated and held them spellbound. Then, chanting an Indian song of triumph, the pæan with which the ancient kings heralded their descent to the god beneath the waters of the Sacred Lake, she cast herself into the globe of fire.

A wave of light flamed across the upturned face of the golden statue, a wail of mingled exultation and despair arose from the throng below.

The Festival of the Gilded Man was ended.









# LAND OF THE CONDOR





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THE CONDOR  
GATE

NARVA'S  
HOUSE

R.G.  
Ross



